

THE:ROMANCE:OF
THE:COMMONPLACE
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GELETT BURGESS





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THE ROMANCE OF THE COMMONPLACE



Gelett Burgess

*Now things there are that, upon him who sees,
A strong vocation lay; and strains there are
That whoso bears shall bear for evermore.*

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Paul Elder and Morgan Shepard :::: San Francisco

THE HISTORY OF THE
THE WOMAN OF
THE COMMONS
IN THE

Year 1840

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by GELETT BURGESS

Entered at Stationer's Hall
London

To
My Sisters, Ella and Anne:
with whom
This Philosophy was Proben

THE ROMANCE OF THE COMMONPLACE

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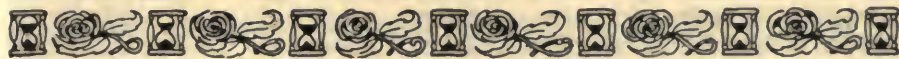
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Introduction

TO let this book go from my hands without some one more personal note than the didactic paragraphs of these essays contained, has been, I must confess, a temptation too strong for me to resist. The observing reader will note that I have so re-written my theses that none of them begins with an "I" in big type, and though this preliminary chapter conforms to the rule also, it is for typographic rather than for any more modest reasons. Frankly, this page is by way of a flourish to my signature, and is the very impertinence of vanity.

But this little course of philosophy lays my character and temperament, not to speak of my intellect, so bare that, finished and summed up for the printer, I am all of a shiver with shame. My nonsense gave, I conceit myself, no clue by which my real self might be discovered. My fiction I have been held somewhat responsible for, but escape for the story-teller is always easy. Even in poetry a man may so cloak himself in metaphor that he may hope to be well enough disguised. But the essay is the most compromising form of literature possible, and even such filmy confidences and trivial gaieties as these write me down for what I am. Were they even critical in character, I would have that best of excuses, a difference of taste, but here I have had the audacity to attempt a discussion of life itself, upon which every reader will believe himself to be a competent critic.

By a queer sequence of circumstances, the essays, begun in the *Lark*, were continued in the *Queen*, and, if you have read these

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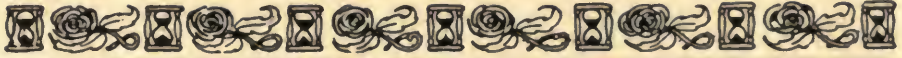
Intro- duction

two papers, you will know that one magazine is as remote in character from the other as San Francisco is from London. But each has happened to fare far afield in search of readers, and between them I may have converted some few to my optimistic view of every-day incident. To educate the British Matron and Young Person was, perhaps, no more difficult an undertaking than to open the eyes of the California Native Son. The fogs that fall over the Thames are not very different to the mists that drive in through the Golden Gate, after all!

Still, I would not have you think that these lessons were written with my tongue in my cheek. I have made believe so long that now I am quite sincere in my conviction that we can see pretty much whatever we look for; which should prove the desirability of searching for amusement and profit rather than for boredom and disillusion.

We are in the day of homespun philosophy and hand-made dogma. A kind of mental atavism has made science preposterous; modern astrologers and palmists put old wine into new bottles, and the discussion of Psychomachy bids fair to revolutionize the Eternal Feminine. And so I, too, strike my attitude and apostrophize the Universe. As being, in part, a wholesome reaction from the prevailing cult, I might call my doctrine Pagan Science, for the type of my proselyte is the Bornese war chief peripatetic on Broadway—the amused wonderer. But I shall not begin all my nouns with capitals, for it is my aim to write of romance with a small “r.” Also my philosophy must not be thought a mere *laissez faire*; it is an active, not a passive creed. We are here not to be entertained, but to entertain ourselves.

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I might have called this book *A Guide Through Middle Age*, for it is then that one needs enthusiasm the most. We stagger gaily through Youth, and by the time Old Age has come we have usually found a practicable working philosophy, but at forty one is likely to have a bitter hour at times, especially if one is still single. Or, so they tell me; I shall never confess to that status, and shall leap boldly into a white beard. A kindly euphemism calls this horrid, half-way stage one's Prime. I have here endeavoured to justify the usage, though I am opposed by a thousand poets.

Introduction

If some of these essays seem but vaguely correlated to my major theme, you must think of them as being mere illustrations or practical solutions of the commonplace, solved by means of the theory I have developed and iterated. It was hard, indeed, to know when to stop, but, ragged as are my hints, I hope that in all essentials I have covered the ground and formulated the main rules of the Game of Living. One does not even have to be an expert to be able to do that!



The Romance of
the Commonplace

THE ROMANCE OF THE COMMONPLACE



April Essays

THEY were begun in the April of my life, and though it is now well into mid-June, some of the glamour of the Spring yet inspires me, and I am still a-wondering. I have tried every charm to preserve my youth, and a drop of wine and a girl or two into the bargain, but the game is near played out.

But what boots marbles and tops when one is initiated into the mysteries of billiards and chess? It has taken me all these years to find that there is sport for every season, and the rules vary. To make a bold play at life, then, without cheating (which is due only to a false conception of the reward), and with the progress, rather than the particular stage reached, in mind, is my aim. So I have tossed overboard all my fears and regrets, and gone in for the higher problems of maturity.

Still, a few of the maxims I drew from my joys and sorrows in the few calmer moments of reverie persist; and these all strengthen me in the romantic view of life. A man must take his work or his art seriously, and pursue it with a single intent; he must fix upon the realities first of all, but there is room for imagination as well, and with this I have savoured my duties, as one puts sauce to pudding. Enough has been written upon the earnestness of motive, of sobriety and all the catalogue of virtues usually dignified with capital initials.

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April Essays

I own allegiance to an empire beside all that—another Forest of Arden—the tinkle of whose laughter is a permanent sustained accompaniment to the more significant notes of man's sober industries.

Must I be dubbed trifler then, because I make a game of life? Every man of spirit and imagination must, I think, be a true sportsman. It is in the blood of genius to love play for its own sake, and whether one uses one's skill on thrones or women, swords or pens, gold or fame, the game's the thing! Surely, it is not only the reward that makes it worth while, it is the problem—the study of each step on the way, the disentangling of the knotted cord of fate, the sequence and climax of move after move, the logical grasp of what is to come upon the chess-board. As it is in the great, then, may it not be in the small? To one of fancy and poetic vision, mere size is an accident, a personal element, a relative, not an absolute quality of things. The microscope reveals wonders to the scientist, as great and as important as does the telescope. To the poet, "a primrose by the river's brim" has the beauty of the Infinite. And so nothing is commonplace, or to be taken for granted. One needs only the fresh eye, the eagerness of interest, and this Universe of workaday things which, with the animals, we get "for a penny, plain," may be coloured with the twopence worth of mind by which we are richer than they.

We have all passed through that phase of art-appreciation in which familiar objects are endowed with an extrinsic æsthetic value. The realist discovers a new sensation in a heap of refuse, the impressionist in the purple shadows of the hills. In weaker intellects the craving for this dignifying of the obvious leads to the gilding of the

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rolling-pin or the decalcomanie decoration of the bean-pot. With something of each of these methods, I would practice upon every-day affairs, and make them picturesque.

April
Essays

This is, perhaps, a characteristically Oriental point of view of life. Undoubtedly it is the Japanese pose, and it is well illustrated in their art. What by Korin would be thought too insignificant for portrayal? He had but to separate an object, or a group of objects, from its environment and he beheld a design, with line, mass, colour and *notan*. Art was to him not a question of subject, but of composition. He held his frame before a tiny fragment of the visible world, any fragment, indeed, and, placing that in its true position, not in regard to its surroundings, but in regard to the frame, it became a pattern. May we not, for our diversion, do thus with Life? If we hold up our frame, disregarding the accidental shadows of tradition and establishment, we may see bits of a new world.

It is thus that the man from Mars would view our life and manners. Unsophisticated, he would hold his frame in front of a man, and, cutting him off from his family, his neighbours, his position in Society, he would see a personage as real and as individual as "the Man with the Glove," or "the Unknown Woman" is to us. He would bring an uncorrupted eye and see strange pictures in the facts of our jaded routine. He would see in accustomed meetings and actions hidden possibilities and secret charms. He would witness this drab life of ours as a bewilderingly endless romance. Nothing would be presupposed, nothing foreseen, and each turn of the kaleidoscope would exhibit another of the infinitely various permutations of human relationship.

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April Essays

Such is the philosophy of youth. It denies the conventional postulates of the Philistine. It will not accept the axioms of the unimaginative; two and two may prove to make five, upon due investigation, seemingly parallel cases may widely diverge, and the greater may not always include the less, in this non-Euclidean Geometry of Life. It transmutes the prose of living into the poetry of idealization, as love transmutes the physical fact of osculation into the beatitude of a kiss. It makes mysteries of well-known occurrences, and it turns accepted marvels into simple truths, comprehensible and self-evident.

Civilization refines and analyzes. It seeks the invisible rays of the spectrum and delights in overtones, subtle vibrations and delicate nuances of thought. So this neglected philosophy of enthusiasm also gleans the neglected and forgotten mysteries of humanity. Its virtue is in its economy; it wrings the last drop of sensation from experience. Like modern processes of manufacture it produces good from what was considered but waste and tailings. By a positive contribution to happiness it refutes the charge of trifling, for in the practice of this art one does but pick up what has been thrown away. All's fish that comes to its net.

But it is more than a science; it has more than an economic value for happiness—it is a religion. The creed of hope bids one wonder and hope and rejoice, it teaches us to listen for the whispered voice, to see the spirit instead of the body of the facts of life. But it does more; it is illuminating, and reveals a new conception of beauty. There is an apocryphal legend of the Christ that tells how He with His disciples were passing along a road, when they came upon the body of a dead dog. Those with Him shrank from

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the pitiful sight with loathing, and drew away. But Jesus went calmly up to the decaying flesh and leaning over it, said gently, "How beautifully white are his teeth!" The customary moral drawn from the story is one of gentleness and pity, the kindness and charity of looking at the good, rather than the evil that is present. But it has a more literal meaning, and teaches clearly the lesson of beauty.

April
Essays

For it has come to this: that even in our pleasures we are influenced by prejudice and tradition. Some things are as empirically branded beautiful or ugly, as others are declared right or wrong, and to this dogma we conform. Korin, when he held his frame before a clothes-line fluttering with damp garments, saw not only an interesting design, but a beautiful one; yet the Monday's wash might be taken as something typically vulgar and ugly to the common mind.

We Anglo-Saxons have debased many facts of life, once rightly thought of as exquisitely beautiful, into the category of the beast. Sexual passion is the great example, but there are myriads of lesser things which, viewed calmly, purely, as some strange god able to see clearly without passion or prejudice, might view them, would take on lovely aspects. When such situations approach the pathetic, as the sight of some forlorn half-naked mother nursing her child on a doorstep, or the housemaid, denied of the chance of seclusion, embracing her lover in the publicity of the park, this diviner phase of common human nature is patent to the casual observer. When they approach the comic, also, it is easier to believe that every scene may have its complimentary phase, and the most careless may read the joke between the lines. But much of the more subtle delight

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April Essays

of life escapes us, like the tree-toad in the oak, because it is so much a part of its surroundings; its charm is of so intrinsic a value that we do not notice it. We are used to finding our beauty within gilt rectangles, set off from other things not so denominated as especially worthy of regard; we expect it to be labelled and highly coloured.

Two things alone remain safe from this bias of custom— Love and Youth. To the lover, the tying of a shoe-lace on his mistress's foot may be as sacred a rite and may contain as much sentiment as the most impassioned caress. To the child, the mud-pile has possibilities of infinite bliss. To the one comes eternal beauty, to the other eternal mystery. And so, to touch these forever, and to lose no intermediary sensation of charm, whether it be humour, romance, pathos or inspiration, to be bound by every link that connects Youth to Love, that was my April essay!

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Getting Acquainted

TWO lives moving in mysterious orbits are drawn together, and for an instant, or maybe for ever after, whirl side by side. We call the encounter an introduction, and we usually proceed to stifle the wonder of it by impersonal talk of art, books or the drama. It is an every-day affair and does not commonly stir the imagination. And yet to the connoisseur in living the meeting may be an event as well as an episode. He is a discoverer come to an unknown shore—it may be the margent of a boundless sea or not, but of a certain it is swung by new tides and currents to be adventured and plumbed.

How can we, supercivilized out of almost all real emotion, develop the potential charm of this first glimpse of a new personality? It is guarded by conventionality; the shutters are down, the door is barricaded; you may knock in vain with polite interrogations, and no one appears at the window. Must we perforce set the house afire, smite or shriek aloud to bring this stranger's soul to his eyes for one searching gaze, face to face? The time is so short—we must greet, and pass on to the next; we exchange easy commonplaces, and so the chance vanishes. Why not defy custom and boldly snatch in that magic moment some satisfactory taste of warm human intercourse?

Curiously enough, this strangeness—this lack of background in new acquaintances—is one of the freshest charms of meeting. Who would not throw off all restraint and talk frankly with a man from

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Getting Acquainted

the planet Mars or Venus? Could we resurrect an inhabitant of Atlantis we could give him our whole confidence—and even a South Sea Islander, were he intelligent, might be our confessor. Where then shall we draw the line of convention? Mars is some 140,000,000 miles away—San Francisco is but 9,000—the ratio is inadequate but there is a guarantee of candour in mere distance. May we not apply the same rule to nearer neighbours and look upon them in this interesting light?

There is no such stimulating instant possible for old friends for they are bound by preconceived ideals of personality—they are pigeon-holed as this or that—circumscribed by mutual duty and sacrifice; they must reconcile present whims to past vagaries; they are held to strict account of consistency with previous moods; but on our first meeting with another we are free of all this constraint, and if we have courage may meet soul to soul without reserves. We may confess untellable things in that moment, for there is no perspective of formulated opinion into which the confidence must be fitted—the little secret is safe alone in the new mind, and will not be held to intolerable account. We may even for this once state a brutal truth, for we are unpledged to distressing considerations. We may be in some few sacred thoughts more intimate with a stranger than with an old friend. Such is the divine franchise of this first sudden opportunity. No compact is yet sealed; you must take me as you find me, like me or not, it matters little, since it is for us to say whether or not we shall meet again.

This play is, as Dickens says of melancholy, “one of the cheapest and most accessible of luxuries,” for the scene is always ready, set in the nearest drawing-room. Every stranger has a possible fas-

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ination and comes like a prince incognito. It is probably your own fault, not his, if the disguise is not dropped during the first impetuous flurry of talk. Children do these things better, making friends not inch by inch, but by bold advances of genuine confidence, yet approaching each new mystery with respect. So we, too, like the child, must dress these our dolls, and put them into their first mental attitudes with sincerity and trust before they will come to life. We must put much feeling into the relation—giving and taking—so much that we cannot only confide our tenderest spiritual aspirations, but invest trifles with unaccustomed worth and significance. These are not impossible sensations even for such accidental fellowship, for nothing is too unimportant to reveal personality and orient one's point of view. But we must proceed from the inside, outward—beginning with truths and thence to fancy. It is the *apriori* method; not deducing the character of your neighbour from his visible idiosyncracies of taste and habit, but boldly inducing a new conception, making him what you will, and varying the picture by successive approximations as his words and actions modify your theory.

Getting Acquainted

No one is too dull for the experiment, as no mummy is too common to be unwrapped. Granted only that he is newly found, so that you have imagination, romance and sentiment on your palette, you may paint him as you will. The colours may wash, but for the while he is your puppet and must dance to your piping, if, indeed, you do not become his.

There are those, of course, who will but cry "Oh!" and "Ah!" to your essays—dolts with neither wits nor words nor worth, who take all and give nothing; no one can set such damp stuff afire.

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Getting Acquainted

Well, after all, though you have unmasked, retreat is still possible. With how many duller friends have you given your parole and cannot escape with honour!

Indeed, it is not so desirable that we should always win, as that the game itself be worth the playing.

One must not expect to make a friend at each introduction. To make the most of the minute in this way, then, to strike while the iron is hot (and, better, to heat it yourself)—this is the art of getting acquainted. It is the higher flirtation, not dependent upon sex or temperament, but of many subtler dimensions, and though it soon turns into the old familiar ruts, the first steps, made picturesque by a common fancy, shall never lose their glamour, and one shall remember to the very last how the first shots went home.

But do not confound playing with playing a part. One may do all this sincerely, honestly giving good coin, and that is the only game worth while; for of a sudden it may wake into new beauty like a dream come true, and you will find yourself in Arcady. No more fooling then, for the real you is walking by my side, hand in hand. We shall not be sorry either, shall we, that we hurried round the first corner into the open—that we jumped a few hedges? Surely we have an infinite friendship for our inaccessible goal, and though the first rush was exhilarating, there are more inspiring heights beyond!



Dining Out

WHY human beings are so fond of eating together and making a ceremonial of the business it is hard to say. Man is almost the only animal who prefers to consume his food in company with his kind, for even sheep and cattle wander apart as they graze, seeking private delicacies. Early in the morning, it is true, most cultivated persons are savages, preferring to breakfast in seclusion and *dishabille*; lunch time finds them in a slightly barbarous state, and they tolerate company; but by evening we all become gregarious and social, and we resent the absence of an expected companion at the table as of a course omitted.

And so, whether we dine at home or abroad we call it a poor dinner where we have good things only to eat. The dullest, most provincial hostess has come to understand this, and each does what she can, in inviting guests, to form partnerships or combinations sympathetic and enlivening. There are, of course, always those impossibles, poor relations or what-not, whom policy or politeness imperatively demands, and every dinner-table is, in attempt at least, a conversational constellation of stars of the first magnitude separated by lesser lights.

From these fixed stars radiate flashes of talk, and supplementing this, the laughter of the connecting circle should follow as punctually as thunder upon lightning. The hostess, like a beneficent sun, kindles and warms and sways her little system, while the servants

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revolve about the table in their courses, like orderly planets.

Dining Out

But we might push the allegory a step farther. Though the round of a score of dinners may exhibit no more unusual a cosmogony than this, yet at every thirty-third event, perhaps, we may encounter a comet! There is no prognosticating his eccentric course; he comes and goes according to a mysterious law, but wherever he appears, blazing with a new light, foreign to all our conventions, he is a compelling attraction, drawing the regular and steady orbs of fashion this way and that out of their orbits, shifting their axes, and upsetting social tides and seasons.

To such an innovator a dinner is given not for food but for pastime, and it is a game of which he may change the rules as soon and as often as they hamper his enjoyment. It matters little to him that he is dressed for a feast of propriety. To him alone it is not a livery; he is not the servant of custom. If it pleases him to settle a dispute out of hand, he will send the butler for the dictionary while the discussion is hot, or more likely go himself forthright. If he wishes to see a red rose in the hair of his host's daughter over against him, he will whip round two corners to her place, and adjust the decoration. And if it is necessary to his thesis that you, his shocked or amused partner, help him illustrate a Spanish *jerabe*, you too must up and help him in the pantomime if you would not have such fine enthusiasm wasted for a scruple.

I knew one such once who retrieved an almost hopelessly mis-arranged dinner by his generalship, usurping the power of the hostess herself. The guests were distributed in a way to give the greatest possible discomfort to the greatest number, though from stupidity rather than from malice. Mr. Comet solved the problem

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at a glance. He rose before the fish was served, with a wine-glass in one hand and his serviette in the other. "The gentlemen," he announced, "will all kindly move to the left four places." It was before the day of "progressive dinner parties," and the scheme was new. The ladies gasped at his audacity, but after this change of partners the function began to succeed.

Dining Out

Your comet, then, must not only be a social anarchist but he must convert the whole company, or he presents merely the sorry spectacle of a man making a fool of himself, never a sight conducive to appetite or to refined amusement, except perhaps to the cynic. He must be able to swing the situation. He must believe, and convince others, that the true object of a dinner is to amuse, and if it should take all of the time devoted to the *entrée* for him to show the pretty sculptress at his right how to model an angel out of bread, his observing hostess should feel no pang that he has neglected his brochette. After all, the elaborate supervision of the *ménu* was undertaken, any modern hostess will acknowledge, only that, in the dire case her guests did not succeed in amusing each other, they might at least have good things to eat. Every dish untasted in the excitement of conversation, then, should be a tribute to her higher skill in experiments with human chemistry.

If she can catch no comet, however, she must be contented with lesser meteoric wits who make up for real brilliancy by saying what they do say quickly and spontaneously; with the punsters, in short, and such hair-trigger intellects. Failing these, the last class above the bores-positive are those well-meaning diners-out who load themselves with stories for a dinner as a soldier goes into an engagement with a belt full of cartridges. They may not get a chance for

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Dining Out

a shot very often, but, given an opening, their fire is accurate and deadly till the last round is gone, when they are at the mercy of a more inventive wit. Yet even these welter-weights have their place at the table, for we must have bread as well as wine.

It was one of Lewis Carroll's pet fancies to have a dinner-table in the shape of a ring, and half the guests seated inside upon a platform which revolved slowly round the circle till each one had circumnavigated the orbit and passed opposite every guest seated on the outside of the table. But this would break up many of the little secret schemes for which the modern dinner is planned, and many a young man would suddenly find himself flirting with the wrong lady across the board.

And this last hint carries me from the exoteric to the esoteric charms of the dinner. Here, however, you must guess your own way; I dare not tell you precisely what it means when Celestine shifts her glass from left to right of her plate, nor what I answer when I raise my serviette by one corner, for Celestine and I may dine with you some day, and you may remember our little code.

You would better not invite me anyway, for, though I
am no comet, yet I admit I would be mad
enough to upset the claret purposely
rather than have nothing
exciting happen!

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The Uncharted Sea

AY, THERE'S the rub! If we could but forecast our dreams, who would care to keep awake? In that, we are no further advanced than in the times of Pythagoras; still clumsy, ignorant amateurs in this most fascinating and mysterious game, played by every race and condition of men under the moon. There are some, maybe, who do not dream, poor half-made men and women, to whom a waking, literal prosaic life is the whole of existence. They stay idly at home, while you and I take ship upon the Unknown Sea and navigate uncharted waters every night. Then we are poets, dunces, philosophers, clowns or madcaps of sorts in a secret carnival, changing not only our costumes, but often our very selves, doffing conscience, habit and taste, to play a new part at each performance.

If we could but manage this raree-show, and not be mere marionettes, wired to the finger of the Magician, what tremendous adventures might we not undertake! We have rare glimpses of the Lesser Mysteries, but the inner secrets of that inconsequential empire are still undiscovered. The revels confound us; we are whirled, intoxicated or drugged, into a realm of confusion, and, out of touch with senses, reason and will, we cannot quite keep our heads clear. How many of us have tried to "dream true," like Peter Ibbetson, even to obeying the foolish formula he described, lying, hands under head, foot upon foot, murmuring his magic words?

Try as we may, those of us who are true dreamers can never

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The Uncharted Sea

quite accept the psychologist's explanation of dreams. Some cases may be easily understood, perhaps, such as the pathological influence of a Welsh rarebit, a superabundance of bed covers, or suggestive noises. We may account, too, for those absurd visions that appear so often on awakening, when one sense after another comes breaking into our consciousness, and when the mind, summoned suddenly to construct some reasonable relation between incongruous floating pictures, seizes upon any explanation, however ridiculous. But of deeper dreams, dreams logical or meaningful, dreams that recur or are shared by others, modern science does not give any satisfactory theory, and we are forced, willingly enough no doubt, to apply the hypotheses of mysticism.

There are dreams, too, so progressive and educational that they seem to involve a new science unknown in this workaday world. So many of us have had experiences with levitation in our dream life that we are, so to speak, a cult. I myself began by jumping, timing each spring with the precise moment of alighting from a previous leap, profiting by the rebound, and, after many experiments I am now able to float freely, even accomplishing that most difficult of all feats, rising in the air by a deliberate concentrated effort of will, even while lying on my back. Yet all of us, jumpers, flyers or floaters, must wait till that wonderful dream comes to us, after months maybe, to indulge in that most exhilarating pastime.

Children's dreams are (until they are cruelly undeceived) quite as real as their waking moments, and it may be that we shall, in time, learn the forgotten art from them. It is dependent, no doubt, upon their power of visualizing imagined objects while their eyes are shut, but while still awake; but this ability to call up the images of

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anything at will is as soon lost as their belief in dreams. Though this habit fades and is forgotten in the growing reality of our outward life, it may not be impossible with practice to regain the proficiency, for at times of great physical fatigue and mental exaltation the power comes back, often intensified almost to the point of hallucination. If we could train our imagination then, and learn to see pictures when our eyes are shut, these might become more accurate and real, so that at the moment of sinking into unconsciousness, as we lose hold on tangible things, the vision would become one with the reality, and, still imagining and creating, we might pass over the footlights and dream true. To most of us there comes a recognizable moment when we know we are just at the border of sleep; if we could then with our last effort of will keep control of the moving pictures we might go wherever we wished.

The Uncharted Sea

We might learn, too, to remember more of what happens in the night. We usually give what has passed in dream no more than an indulgent smile, and forget the strangeness of it all as soon as we are well awake. It is as if we had hurriedly turned the pages of an illustrated book. We recall, here and there, a few striking pictures, beautiful or comic, and the volume is replaced upon the shelves not to be taken down till the next evening. It is a book from which we learn little; its contents are not even amusing to any one else, who has as fanciful tales in his own dreamland library. If we could, upon first awakening, impress our minds with the reality of our dreams, we might be able to recall more and more, and find that in spite of their incongruity there was some law which governed their visitation and some meaning in their grotesque patterns.

To one who dreams frequently, bedtime cannot fail to be some-

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thing to look forward to, to hope and to prepare for with efforts to capture in the net of sleep some beautiful dream. May we not, sometime, find the proper bait, and lie down confident that we shall be duly enchanted in some delightful way, according to our desires? Till then we must each buy our nightly ticket in Sleep's lottery, and draw a blank or a prize, as Morpheus wills. Some say that the most refreshing sleep is absolute unconsciousness of time—that one should shut one's eyes, only to open them in the morning, with the night all unaccounted for. But no true dreamer will assent to this; he knows it is not so. I was told in my youth, that if

I turned the toes of my boots toward the bed, I should

have a nightmare. I confess I have never dared

try it. But, rather than not dream at all, I

believe I should be tempted to haz-

ard the experiment.

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The Art of Playing

TIME was when we made our own toys; when a piece of twine, a spool, a few nails and a bit of imagination could keep us busy and happy all day long. There were no new-fangled iron toys "made in Germany," so tiresome in their inevitable little routine of performance, so easily got out of order, and so hard, metallic and realistic as to be hardly worth the purchase. A penny would, indeed, buy some funny carved wooden thing that aroused a half-hour's excitement, but it was never quite so alluring as when in the front window of the toy-shop. Such queer animals never became thoroughly acclimated to the nursery, and they lost their lustre in a half-holiday. The things that gave permanent satisfaction were home-made, crude and capable of transformation. A railway train might, with a small effort of the fancy, become a ship or a dragon. Are there such amateur toy-builders now, in this age when everything is perfect and literal, when even a box of building-blocks contains a book of plans to supply imaginative design to the modern child? Indeed, many children are now-years too lazy even to do their own playing. I have heard of one who was used to sit on a chair and order his nurse to align his nine-pins and bowl them down for him!

Perhaps one notices the lack of creative ability in children more in the city where ready-made toys are cheap and accessible, than in the country where the whole world is full of wonderful possibilities for entrancing pastime. Nature is the universal playmate, perpet-

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ually parodying herself in miniature for the benefit of those who love to amuse themselves with her toys. Every brook is a little river, every pond an unfathomable sea. She plants tiny forests of fern and raises microscopic mountains in every sand-bank. Flowers and plants furnish provender for Lilliputian groceries, the oak showers acorn cups; what wonder we believe, as long as we can, in fairies?

And yet, strange to say, it is the city more often than the country child who feels the charm of these marvels. The freshness and the strangeness breed a fascinated wonder; it is, after flagged pavements and brick walls, almost too good to be true. The juvenile rustic is more familiar with Nature. It is his business to know when the flowers come, where berries ripen and birds nest. It is scarcely play to him, it is a science to be applied to his personal profit. The woods and rivulets are his familiar domain, to be forayed and hunted specifically for gain. And this, though it is delightful, is not play. For him, there is no glamour over the fields until long after, when his native countryside has become inaccessible.

Perhaps the art of playing is, after all, a matter more of temperament than environment, for one sees, at times, good sport even in the city streets, though it is rare nowadays. I had my own full share of it, for my youth was an age of pure romance. My clan had its own code and its own traditions. Every man of us had his suit of wooden armour, his well-wrought weapons and his fiery steed. We were all for Scott. We had our Order, small, but well up in the technique of feudal ways, facile in sword-play, both with the thin, sinewy hard-pine rapier, and the huge, two-handed, double-hilted battle-sword that should stand just as high as one's head. On the brick sidewalks we tilted on velocipedes, full in the view of the anxious

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passers-by. *Cap-à-pie* in pine sheathed with tin, with a shield blazoned with a tiger couchant, and inscribed with a Latin motto out of the back of the dictionary, many a long red lance I shivered, and many a wheel I broke. On Warren Avenue I did it, opposite the church. What would I not give, now, to see such sights in town!—instead, I watch little boys smoking cigarettes upon the street corners, waiting for their girls.

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I knew a youngster, too, who organized in his town a postoffice department, established letter-boxes and a regular service of boy carriers. He drew and coloured the stamps himself—you will find them in few collections, though they should have enormous value from their rarity. Such games are consummate play, even though the sport goes awry all too soon; it is too great to last!

It is the older brother who should give finesse to such sport. Without him, complications arise which accomplish at last the ruin of the game. Many of us do not truly learn to play until it is too late to do so with dignity, and to these, the appreciation of the young gives a fine excuse for prolonging the diversion. We fancy we cannot, when grown up, play imaginative games for the pure joy of it, as does the child; we think we must have an ulterior motive. Yet the father, who whittles out a boat for his son, often gets more delight than the child, who would far rather do it himself, no matter how much more crudely accomplished.

The theater is the typical play for grown-ups; the name itself, "play," is significant of the unquenchable tendency of youth. And this reminds me of a most amusing case where two grown-ups dared to be absolutely ingenuous. It was upon a honeymoon, when if ever, adults have the right to yield to juvenile impulses. As the

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groom was titled and the bride fair, society took it ill that the two should retire to their country house and deny access to all neighbours. One at last called, too important to be denied admittance by the servants, and the astonished visitor discovered the happy pair stretched over the dining-room table, training flies whose wings had been clipped, to pull, in a harness of threads, little paper wagons! This had been their absorbing occupation for ten blissful days!

An important element of play seems to be the doing of things in miniature. See Stevenson, for instance, prone upon the floor, involved in romantic campaigns, massing his troops of tin soldiers, occupying strategic positions in hall and passage, skirmishing over the upstairs "roads of the Third Class, impassable for artillery," intercepting commissary trains labouring up from the Base of Operations in the kitchen, deploying cavalry-screens upon the rug, and out-manœuvring the wily foe that defends the verandah, both being bound by the strict treaties of the play. There is your ideal big brother, and the game of toy soldiers is glorified into weeks of excitement!

The Japanese, immortal children, carry the game of diminution to its extreme. The dwarfed trees and the excruciating carved ivories are not the only symptoms of this delightful disease; for the perfection of the spirit of play one must see their miniature gardens, often the life-employment of the owners. No matter how small the patch of ground employed, every inch is perfect. Pebble by pebble, almost grain by grain, the area is arranged, the tiny rivulet is guided between carefully curved banks, wee bridges span the shores, little lanterns and pagodas are artfully placed, plants and flowers are sown, trees planted, fishes are domiciled, till the garden is a replica of

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Nature at her best. Each view is a toy landscape, and without a scale, as seen in a photograph, for instance, one might think it a garden of the gods. And yet, there is a sort of play where one may use infinite distances, macrocosms for microcosms, if one has the courage and the power of visualization. These games are purely mental, feats of the imagination, though not nearly so difficult as might be thought. I know a sober, workaday lawyer, for instance, who combines the two methods with extraordinary cleverness. His income is not derived solely from his practice, I need hardly say. You will not catch him at his fascinating diversion, for his table is strewn with books and papers, and his playthings are not noticeable amongst the professional litter.

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I have known him to sit for hours gazing at the table, and, once in his confidence—for there is a fraternity of players, and one must give the grip and prove fellowship—he will tell you that he has shrunk to but an inch in height, so that, to him, his desk seems to be some three hundred feet long by a hundred feet wide, and its plateau is elevated some two hundred feet above the floor; as high, that is, as a church. Assuming that he has, by some miraculous means shrunk to one-fiftieth of his stature, the size of everything visible is, of course, increased in a like proportion. His diverting occupation, under this queer state of things, is to explore his little domain, and exist as well as is possible. What adventures has he not had! There was the terrific combat with a cockroach as big as a dragon, which he finally slew with a broken needle! There was the dust storm, when the care-taker swept, and the huge snow crystals like white pie-plates, that came in when the window was opened. He had an enormous

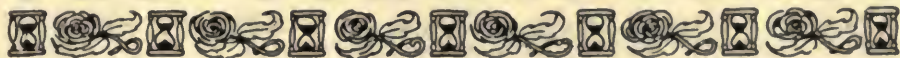
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difficulty in getting water from a glass tumbler, and he broke his teeth upon the crystals of sugar that, as a lawyer, he had been thoughtful enough to strew upon the table for the benefit of himself as an Inchling. I believe he is now attempting to escape to the floor by means of a spool of thread, if he cannot make up his mind to risk a descent by means of a paper parachute. It is a world of his own, as real to him as the child's toy paradise, a retreat immune from the cares of his daily life, a never-tiring playground, with perpetual discoveries possible. He, if any one, has discovered not only the art of playing, but has applied the science as well!

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The Use of Fools

WHAT a dull world it would be if everyone were modest, discreet and loyal to that conformity which is called good taste! if, in short, there were no fools to keep us amused. What would divert us from the deadly routine of seriousness? What toy scandal would we have to discuss at dinner? What would leaven this workaday world of common-places, if everyone were gifted with common sense? Is it not, when you stop to think of it, a bit inconsiderate to discountenance buffoonery and to resent innocently interesting impropriety? Should we not rather encourage eccentricity with what flattering hypocrisies we may, so that we shall never be at a loss for things to smile at and talk about?

A fair sprinkling of fools in the world is as enlivening as a pinch of salt in a loaf of bread. They give a relish to life, and flavour with a brisk spicery of nonsense what would otherwise be oppressively flat. Civilized existence, if it were always cooked up and served to us by Mrs. Grundy herself, would be unpalatable enough; but luckily her infallible recipes are not always carried out, and a few plums and cloves get into her pudding.

We may not care to play the part of public jesters ourselves, but the least we can do is to be grateful to those who are willing to become absurd for our benefit. Patronize them daintily, therefore, lest they backslide into propriety; remember that there is such a thing as enjoyment without ridicule. To make fun of a person

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to his face is a brutal way of amusing one's self; be delicate and cunning, and keep your laugh in your sleeve, lest you frighten away your game.

But there will doubtless always be enough who are willing to play the guy, whether we encourage or condemn. The fool is a persistent factor in society, and yet the common misconception of his status and economic function is silly and unfair. With the prig and the crank, the fool has been reviled from time immemorial, and persecuted out of all reason. He is protected by no legislation; your fool is always in season, and is the target for universal contempt. Instead of this perpetual fusillade of wits, there should be a "close season" for fools to allow them to propagate and grow fearless, after which we could make game of them in safety of a full supply. Since he is, in a way, the lubricator of the wheels of life, a coiner of smiles, he should be carefully bred to give the greatest possible amount of diversion. He should be trained like an actor that his best points may be brought out; he should be paid a salary or kept in livery to amuse the public, with no need or excuse for sobriety.

But, until the fool is properly appreciated and his place assured, we must put up with the amateurs that haunt the street and drawing-room. It is too much to hope for the sight of a zany every time we go out doors, but, when we do encounter one, what a ray of sunshine gleams athwart our strict fashions—poor sober dun slaves to style and custom! If we chance upon a woman who dares perpetrate her own radical theories of dress, who combines pink with red, or commits a gay indiscretion in millinery, how superbly she is distinguished, for the moment, from the ruck and swarm of victims to good taste! She is at once an event and a portent. The afternoon

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is quaintly illuminated with a phenomenon, and we scan with new interest and expectation the dull and sombre throng.

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How small a deviation from the mode, indeed, is necessary to provoke a revivifying smile! Every such unconscious laughing-stock is a true benefactor, ministering to our sense of superiority. Were we never to see the freaks, we would not know how glorious is our own uncompromising regularity. Truly, if we have sufficient conceit, every one in the world, in a way of thinking, may be considered foolish relatively to our own criterion. "All the world is queer except thee and me," said the Quaker, "and even thee is a little queer!"

Such praise of fools may seem extravagant or illogical, but if it is so, it must be not because the fool is not helpful and stimulating in society, but because, after all, he is not so easily identified as one might suppose. Celestine tells me she never calls a man a fool, but instead asks him why he does so,—and in this way she often learns something. That is the most disagreeable trait of fools; often, upon investigation, what appears to be genuine nonsense is but the consistent carrying out of a clever and original idea, whose novelty alone excites amusement. The fool thus cheats us of our due enjoyment by being in the right. It seems dishonest of a fool to instruct; it is beside the mark, and outside his proper sphere, and yet even Confucius is said to have learned politeness from the impolite. To see one's own faults and weaknesses caricatured spoils the laugh that should testify to the folly.

We cannot be sure, either, that the ass who amuses us by his eccentric absurdities may not eventually cheat us of the final victory by proving to be but the vanguard of a new custom

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to which we or our children must, perforce, in time succumb, and fall into line with him far behind, only then to count our present attitude foolish and old-fashioned. Let us therefore laugh while we may, for your fool is but a chameleon who refuses to change colour. What today is arrant silliness may tomorrow be good horse-sense, wherefore it is wise to watch fools carefully when you find them, lest the sport spoil overnight, and you yourself become ridiculous, while the fool takes your place as the amused philosopher.

The word "fad," they say, was derived from the initial letters of the phrase "for a day." So we, the followers of the latest mode and mood, are, it would seem, the true ephemera, and the fools who defy the local custom are immortal. The fool is merely an anachronism. All inventors, most poets, and some statesmen have been honoured with the title, since we laugh chiefly at what we do not understand. There are more synonyms for "fool" than for any other word in the language!

So we must take our chances and smile at all and sundry, at men of one idea, hobby riders, cranks, *poseurs*, managing mammas and antic youths, blushing brides and fond parents, bounders, pedants, bigots and hens with their heads cut off. Laugh at them, the character parts in the comedy of life, for the show is amusing, but be not resentful if you find the privilege of laughing is a common right, and you in your turn become a victim. For, strange as it may seem, many of these actors may be so foolish as to think you the fool yourself!

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Absolute Age

WHEN I was a child, I invented a game so simple and so passive, that its enjoyment was permitted even on the rigorous Sundays of my youth. Upon a slate I ruled vertical columns, and at the head of these I wrote: "Men, women, boys, girls, babies, horses, dogs." Then, seated at a window commanding the street, I made note of the passers-by, and as fast as they appeared in sight I made a mark for each in the appropriate column. The compilation of this petty census was a pleasing pastime, and, moreover, it seemed to me that my categories were obviously complete. There were, in my world, but men and women, boys, girls and babies—what else, indeed?

But this primary classification of sex and years did not satisfy me long, and I discovered that my system must be amended if I would segregate—mentally now—the various types I encountered. There were, for instance, good persons and bad ones, men educated and ignorant, rich and poor, and I superimposed upon my first list one after another of these modifying conditions. But with a larger view of life these crude distinctions overlapped and became confused, and I saw that the whole system was but a rude makeshift.

Yet until I could pigeon-hole a new acquaintance in my own mind and put him with others of his kind I was never quite satisfied. Up to a certain stage in development, what we are most struck with is the difference between persons, but after the first intellectual climacteric we begin to see resemblances, invisible before, that knit men

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of different aspect together; and, that game of synthesis once begun, we must play it till we die. Every new acquaintance is an element of our experience—a new fact refuting or corroborating our theory of life, and, though we often may put the case into a separate compartment and label the specimen “unique,” before long we shall probably have to reconsider the whole collection and devise a new system of arrangement for the complex characteristics of human nature.

But what analysis can we adopt which shall prove universally satisfactory? If we rank men according to mental, moral or spiritual attributes, one quality is sure to contradict or affect the other, and it is hard to decide which trait is paramount. Friendship is dependent upon none of these things, and yet in our affections we recognize, almost unconsciously, grades and qualities of attraction and kinship. Of a bunch of letters at our breakfast plate, we are sure to open a special one first or last, as the expectation of pleasure may decide. We accept this nearness, this intimate relationship, without reasoning; it is manifested in the first flash of recognition of the handwriting, at sight of a photograph, at the sound of a voice or a name. Some are indubitably of our own clan, and others, however their charm, or a temporary passion, may blind us for a time, are foreigners, and speak another language of the emotions. There are invisible groups of souls, mysteriously related, and the tie is indissoluble.

So I have come to adopt as the final classification what, for want of a better term, I must call Absolute Age—age or condition, that is, not relative, not dependent upon the year of one's birth. No one, surely, has failed to observe children who seem to be older than

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their parents in possibility of development. One knows that in a few years this child will have caught up to and passed his father or mother in soundness of judgment, in a sense of the relative importance of things, in the power to distinguish sham, convention and prejudice from things of vital import. This child is older in point of Absolute Age. When his soul has served its juvenile apprenticeship in the world of the senses he shall understand truths his parents never knew.

**Absolute
Age**

This capacity for comprehending life does not seem to be dependent upon actual definite experience with the world. The villager may have this hidden wisdom as clearly as the man who has seen and done, who has fought, loved and travelled far and well. The mystics hold that we have all lived before, and that some have profited by their experiences in former lives and have attained a fairer conception of the very truth. But, though this illustrates what is meant by the term Absolute Age, it is by no means necessary to accept such an explanation of the effects we perceive. It is enough that we can definitely classify our friends by their emotions and desires, and by their point of view on life. In other words, some are philosophers and some are not. And even the philosophers are of varying sects. Some have a keen, childlike enthusiasm for the more obvious forms of excitement, for all that is new and strange and marvellous, while others are incapable of being shocked, surprised or embarrassed—they have poise, and prefer the part of observer to that of actor in the game of life.

And yet, too, there is a simplicity which comes from a greater Absolute Age, a relish for real things that persists with enthusiasm. It is by this simplicity one may distinguish the cult from those that

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are merely *blasé* or worldly wise. The joy in the taste of the fresh apple under the tongue, or in the abandon of the child at play, in the strength of youth and the grace of women,—this is a joy that does not fade; no, not even for those who would not trouble to go to the window if the king rode by! As a man can learn much by travel without losing his capacity for enjoying his native town, so one can enjoy life intellectually to the utmost without ever losing one's grasp on one's self, without being intoxicated by excitement or blinded by egoism, and yet feel still the clean, sane joys of youth to the last.

We have come to our Absolute Age by different paths. If we are of the same status, you and I, you may have learned one lesson and I another, yet the sum of our experience is the same. We are akin spiritually, although we have not had the same process of development. You, perhaps, have fought down hate and I have conquered dishonesty, but we are calmer and wiser, we think, than those whom we smile at quietly when we view their eagerness for things that no longer concern us. We recognize, too, that there are others to whose attainments our own powers are infantile. But in either case the superiority is neither mental nor moral nor spiritual—
it is that mysterious inherent
quality we call "caste."

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The Manual Blessing

SURELY if there is one sharp, active sensation that, in this changeful life of ours, we never tire of, never outgrow, it is in the satisfaction of creative manual work. There is a conservation of pleasure as there is a conservation of energy, and our taste is being continually transmuted and evolved. One by one we outlive the joys of youth, the delights of physical exercise, the zest of travel, the beatitude of emotion, the singing raptures of love, passing from each to a more mature appeal, a more refined appetite, a subtler demand of the intellect or of the spirit. The familiar games lose their savour, the dance gives way to the drama, travel to the calmer investigation of homely miracles. We tire of seeing and begin to read, feasting peacefully at the banquet of the arts that other men have spread. This is, for many of us, what age means—a giving up of active for passive pleasures when the old games lose their charm.

But the joy of creation does not fade, for in that lies our divinity and our claim to eternity. Each new product arouses the same thrill, the same spiritual excitement, the same pride of victory, and yet, strangely enough, though we think we work only for the final notch of accomplishment, it is not the completion but the construction that holds us entranced. Not the last stroke, but every stroke brings victory! It is like the climbing of a mountain. Do we endure the toil merely for the sake of the view at the summit? No, but for the primitive passion of conflict, the inch-by-inch fight

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against odds, the heaping of endeavour on endeavour, the continual measuring of what has been done with what remains to do. The finishing climax is but the exclamation point at the end of the sentence—most of the sensation has been used up before we come to the full stop, and that point serves but to sum up our emotion in a visible emblem of success.

Many of us believe we are debarred from the exercise of this divine birthright, the joy of creation. We have neither talent nor genius—not even that variety which consists in the ability to take infinite pains. Are we not mistaken in this? I think we may each have our share of the immortal stimulus.

To understand this, we must go back and back in the history of the race, and there we shall find that this satisfaction, this sane and virile delight in construction, was possible to the meanest member of the tribe. Its enjoyment came chiefly in the exercise of a laborious persistency in little things. The combination or addition of the simplest elements achieved a positive pleasurable result. The neolithic man chipped and chipped at his flint until the arrow-head was perfected, and his joy, had he been able to analyze it, was not so much in the last stroke as in every stroke. Not so much that he had himself with his own hands made something, as that he had been *making* something of use and beauty, and the possibility of that joy abiding with him as long as he lived. The makers of ancient pottery repeated the same shapes and designs, or, if their fancy soared, dared new inventions, but the satisfaction was in the doing. The carvers and joiners of the Middle Ages worked as amateurs in cottage and hovel, and in their work lay their content; no tyranny could wrest from them this well-spring of pleasure. Old age could but

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weaken the hand; I doubt if it could tame the immemorial joy of creation.

We cannot all be professional mechanics, for the division of labour has cast our lot more and more with the workers in intellectual pursuits. But we might make handicraft an avocation, if not a vocation, and that regimen would help our digestion, perhaps, more than pepsin or a course of the German baths. Were I a physician I should often recommend the craft cure—a panacea for dyspepsia, ennui and nostalgia.

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Here is my modern health resort, my sanatorium for these most desperate of diseases; a little hamlet of shops and tents on the foothills of the Coast Range in California, where as you work you can look across a green valley to the blue Pacific. Here in this new land nature calls fondly to your soul, and you may turn to the primitive delights of living and taste the tang of the dawn of civilization, fresh and wholesome as a wild berry.

Here, squatting on the bare sun-parched ground, with an Indian blanket over his shoulders, is a corpulent banker with a flint hammer battering a water-worn boulder. Thus, less than a hundred years ago, the Temecula Indians hollowed out their stone mortars on this very *mesa*. Thus they spent happy days, slept like bears, and were up with the birds, each morn a day younger than yesterday. In this lodge of deerskins, where the ground is spread with yellow poppies, sits an ex-secretary of legation, who has known everything, seen everything, done everything but this—to cut with a knife of shell strange patterns upon a circular horn gorget. Finished, his wife might wear it with pride at the Court of St. James, yet it is but the reproduction of a prehistoric ornament, its figures smeared with ochre, cobalt and vermilion, and inlaid with lumps of virgin copper

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by the mound-builders of the Mississippi Valley. In this open shelter of bamboo, a trysting-place for meadow-larks and song-sparrows, lies stretched upon the ground an East India warehouseman, all his gout and lumbago forgotten in the rapturous delight of printing a pattern of chequered stripes with a carved wooden block upon a sheet of *tapa* which he himself—unaided, mind you—has pounded from the fibrous bark of the paper mulberry. His strenuous daughter, once world-worn and frozen, has left Nietzsche, Brahms, and the cult of the symbolists, to sit cross-legged and weave the woolly zigzags of a Navajo blanket. It is the first thing she has made with her ten fingers since she baked mud pies in the sun! Had she a scrap of mirror in her bungalow she could now face it without mortification. An open-air hand-loom is good for the complexion.

But you need not journey to California. Rather make a pilgrimage to your own south attic. If you do but construct cardboard model houses with isinglass windows in your breakfast-room, you will perhaps find that more diverting than collecting cameos or first editions. If you can only compile a concordance to *Alice in Wonderland* you may achieve a hygienic and rejuvenative distraction. Can you cut, stamp, gild, paint, lacquer and emboss a leather belt? Can you hammer jewelry out of soft virgin silver? No? But you could, though, if you tried! Can you forget the impositions of convention in the rapt glow of pride in sawing and nailing together a wooden box? No matter how small it might be, how leaky of joint or loose of cover, it would hold all your worries!

THE COMMONPLACE

The Deserted Island

A FRIEND of mine is curiously hampered by a limitation precluding him from association with any one conversant with the details of the manufacture of cold-drawn wire. To show that this self-imposed abstinence may indicate a most charming devotion to an ideal, rarely shown by the commonplace, is the object of this thesis, and that, too, despite the fact that an indiscriminating extension of the same principle would lead the radical to eschew the society of most of his acquaintances, as well as bar out the whole domain of didactic literature.

When the day is done, and that entrancing hour is come for which some spend many of their waking hours in anticipation, to those blessed with fancy, the curtain of the dark arises, and within the theatre of the Night are played strange comedies. To a select performance I invite all uninitiated who have never enjoyed the drama of the Deserted Island—the perfect and satisfactory employment for the minutes that elapse after retiring and before the anchor is weighed and the voyage begun upon the Sea of Dreams.

There are undoubtedly more than I am aware of who are happy enough to maintain deserted islands of their own—many more, perhaps, than would confess to the possession. To some the history may be well under way; they have long since discovered their island, and many improvements have already been successfully completed. Others, more adventurous, handicapped by stricter limitations and more meagre outfit, are still struggling with the primal demands of

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The Deserted Island

food and shelter. But to those whose imaginations have never put so far out to sea, and would welcome this modest diversion, I advise an expedition of discovery and exploration this very night. You have but to go to bed, close your eyes, and after a few preliminaries you are there!

Authorities differ as to the allowable equipment for the occupancy of the sequestered territory. I myself hold that it is manifestly unfair to be provided with tools of any kind; to have a knife, now, I would call cheating. Surely the only legitimate beginning is to be vomited upon the beach stark naked from the sea, after some fearsome shipwreck in mid-ocean. Then, after years of occupancy, a man might taste the pride of his own resources, unfettered by any legacy inherited from civilization. Settle this point as you may, when the conditions of the game are once understood, the whole history of Science is to be re-enacted.

I have a friend who arrived upon the scene in an open boat containing a keg of water, a crowbar, a pruning-knife, a red silk handkerchief and a woman's petticoat; and with these promiscuous accessories has, in the course of years, transformed the place, which now boasts a stone castle, entirely inhabitable. His island is about two miles long and a half-mile wide—much too narrow for comfort, I assert; the proportions should be about five miles by three, with one dominant hill from which the whole territory may be surveyed.

But the owner of the other island—he of the cold-drawn wire—boldly asserts his right to a half-dozen labourers, presumably natives, and with this force at his disposal he has done wonders with his fief. Glass has been manufactured, fabrics woven, ore smelted and fine roads constructed, so that there now remains nothing to be

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desired but bicycles upon which he and his slaves may traverse the highways. But in vain his unskilled assistants look to him for advice; rack his wits as he may, he can devise no adequate system of making cold-drawn wire, and he is beginning to lose caste with his followers.

The Deserted Island

Now at first sight one might think it necessary for him only to consult an encyclopedia, or to visit an iron mill, yet this course is strictly barred out by the rules of the game, which compels one to use only such information as comes naturally to hand—for one is likely to be cast ashore upon a desert island at any moment, and it is then too late for the research and education that has been before neglected. With any ingenious fellow who has his own amateur ideas on the subject, one may, of course, talk freely; for he may represent one of the more intelligent of the natives; but all they who really know whereof they speak are to be avoided. So the problem of the cold-drawn wire is still unsolved.

I know of an artist, who, free on this enchanted spot, has turned his energies to those diverting pursuits for which his studio leaves no time, and he builds gigantic rock mosaics on the cliffs, selecting from the many coloured boulders on the beach. Luxuries are his only necessities even in his daily life, and the enormity of his trifling on this holiday playground is a thing to wonder at. His art, so used to a censorship of Nature, in his professional mimicries, here goes boldly forth and so mends, prunes and patches the aspect of his island, that the place is now, he says, absolutely perfect; a consummation not altogether discreditable to a nude, near-sighted man, whose eye-glasses were washed off before he arrived on the spot!

But, taking the situation seriously, what will he be in the years

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The Deserted Island

to come? By what gradations shall the lonely artist sink to low and lower levels, abandoned by the stimulus of the outer world, the need for advance, and the struggle for recognition? How soon would he lose the desire to render, in the medium at hand, the lovely forms of nature about him, the subtle tones of the earth and air, lapsing by stages into ever cruder forms of expression, till the whole history of his development had been reversed, and he became content with rude squares, triangles and circles for his patterns, the barbarous effigies of the human form, and the primary colours that satisfy the savage?

And the sense of humour, too—that universal solvent of all our miseries, the oil that lubricates the cumbrous machinery of life—how soon would that go? Is it not, in the last analysis, dependent upon the by-play of the social relationship of men? The inconsistencies of our fellows must be first noticed before we can get the reflected light of ridicule upon our own grotesque actions. It would soon be lost in such a sojourn, our impatience would have no foil, we would take ourselves more and more seriously until the end came upon that day when we had at last forgotten how to laugh.

But, after all, as this text of the hypothetical deserted island is better fitted for a romance than for a sermon, we may leave such forebodings and trace out only the rising curve of improvement. And so, too, interesting as it might be to experience, we may leave aside the moral speculations incident to the discussion of the case where the place becomes occupied by a man and a woman. The possibilities of a shipwreck in company are not for such a brief memoir as this; they offer consideration too intimate for these discreet pages, and are best left to the exclusion of a private audience.

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But choose your company carefully, I entreat you, if you are not soberly minded to be shipwrecked alone. I know of persons with whom, were I cast ashore, there could be no end not tragic, albeit these are highly respectable and praiseworthy individuals, who never did any harm except in that trick of manner by which we recognize the bore. I am often inclined to test the merits of others by mentally permitting them a short visit to my island, but the hazard is too great, and the thought of the possibility of their footprints upon the sand unnerves me.

The Deserted Island

Yet, to a distant islet of this fantastic archipelago I seriously consider consigning certain impossible acquaintances, absolutely intolerable personalities, whose probable fate, forced to endure each other's society, interests me beyond words. Upon one side of this far-away retreat rises a steep cliff overhanging the sea, and here I behold in imagination one after another of these marooned unfortunates pushed headlong over the slope, as, unable to support the society of his companions, each has in turn, by some stratagem, lured his hated accomplice in misery to the summit of the bluff.

But of one island I have not yet spoken. I can get no description of it save that it lies sleeping in the summer sun, washed by the sapphire tides and fanned by the cool south winds, its olive slopes rising softly from the beach, marked by a grove of fruit trees at the crest. More the owner will not tell, for Celestine says there

is no use for a deserted island after it is charted; but by these signs I shall know the place, and my trees are felled and my sails are plaited that shall yet bear me over towards the southwest!

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The Sense of Humour

MUCH as one may look through the small end of a telescope and find an unique and intrinsic charm in the spectacle there offered, so to certain eyes the whole visible universe is humorous. From the apparition of this dignified little ball, rolling soberly through the starry field of the firmament, to the unwarrantable gravity of a neighbour's straw hat, macrocosm and microcosm may minister to the merriment of man. There is more in heaven and earth than is dreamed of in the philosophy of the Realist.

It is one attribute of a man of parts that he shall have, in his mental vision, what corresponds to the "accommodation" of his eye, a flexibility of observation that enables him to adapt his mind to the focus of humour. Myopia and strabismus we know; the dullard can point their analogies in the mental optics, but for this other misunderstood function we have no name; and yet, failing that, we have dignified it as a sense apart—the sense of humour. But no form of lens has been discovered to correct its aberration and transfer the message in pleasurable terms to the lagging brain; and, unless we attempt hypnotism as a last resort, the prosiest must go purblind for life, missing all but the baldest jokes of existence.

Is it not significant, that from the ancient terminology of leechcraft, this word "humour" has survived in modern medicine, to be applied only to the vitreous fluid of the eye? For humour is the medium through which all the phenomena of human intercourse may

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be witnessed, and for those normal minds that possess it, tints this world with a rare colour—like that of the mysterious ultra-violet rays of the spectrum. And indeed, to push further into modern science and speculation, perhaps this ray does not undulate, but shoots forth undeviating as Truth itself, like that from the Cathode Pole. Or, does it not strike our mental retina from some secret Fourth Direction?

The Sense of Humour

But this is mere verbiage; similes, flattering to the elect, but unconvincing to the uninitiate. Yet, as I am resolved that humour is essentially a point of view, I would have a try at proselytizing for the doctrine. For here is a religion ready made to my hand; I have but to raise my voice and become its prophet. The seeds are all sown, the Fraternity broods, hidden in hidden Chapters, guarding the Grand Hailing Sign; who knows but that a spark might not touch off this seasoned fuel, and the flame carry everything before it. O my readers, I give you the Philosophy of Mirth, the Cult of Laughter! Yet it is an esoteric faith, mind you, unattainable by the multitude. Not of the “Te-he! Papa’s dead!” school, nor of the giggling punster’s are its devotees. No comic weekly shall be its organ. It must be hymned not by the hoarse guffaw, but in the quiet inward smile—and for its ritual, I submit the invisible humour of the Commonplace. O Paradox!

Brethren, from this flimsy pulpit, I assert with sincerity, that everything on two legs (and most on four) sleeping or awake, bow-legged or knock-kneed, has its humorous aspect. The curtain never falls on the diversion. You will tell me, no doubt, that here I ride too hard. Adam, you will say with reason, set aside in the beginning certain animals for our perpetual amusement—to wit: the goose, the

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The Sense of Humour

monkey, the ostrich, the kangaroo, and, as a sublime afterthought—symbol of the Eternal Feminine—the hen. Civilization, you may admit, has added to these the goat—but, save in rare moods of insanity, as when the puppy pursues the mad orbit of his tail, the sight of only the aforesaid beasts makes for risibility. The cat, you will say, is never ridiculous. But here again we must hark back to the major premise, unrecognized though it be by the science of Æsthetic, that humour lies in the point of view. If I could prove it by mere iteration it would go without further saying that it is essentially subjective rather than objective. Surely there is no humour in insensate nature, as there is little enough in Art and Music. The bees, the trees, the fountains and the mountains take themselves seriously enough, and though, according to the minor poets, the fields and the brooks are at times moved to laughter, it is from a vegetable, pointless joy of life. Through the human wit alone, and that too rarely, the rays of thought are refracted in the angle of mirth, and split into whimsical rays of complementary sensations and contrasts.

When we lay off the mantle of seriousness and relax the flexors and extensors, if we are well fed, healthy, and of a peaceful mood and capable of indolence, men and women, and even we ourselves, should become to our view players on the stage of life. And what then is comedy but tragedy seen backward or downside-up? It is the negative or corollary of what is vital in this great game of life. The custom has been, however, to give it a place apart and unrelated to the higher unities, as the newspapers assign their witticisms to isolated columns. Rather is it the subtle polarity induced by graver thought, the reading between the lines of the page. And as, to the vigorous intellect, rest does not come through inactivity so much as

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by a change of occupation, the happy humourist is refreshed by the solace of impersonality.

For, to the initiate, his own inconsistencies and indiscretions are no less diverting than those of his associates, and should frequently give rise to emotions that impel him to hurry into a corner and scream aloud with mirth. It is ever the situation that is absurd, and never the victim; and in this lies the secret of his ability to appreciate a farce of which he himself is the hero. He must disincarnate himself as the whim blows, and hang in the air, a god for the time, gazing with amusement at the play of his own ridiculous failures. In some such way, perhaps, do the curious turn over the patterned fabric, to discover, on the reverse, the threads and stitches that explain the construction of the design.

This faculty, then, gives one the stamp of caste by which one may know his brethren the world over, an Order of whose very existence many shall never be aware, till, in some after life, some grinning god conducts them to the verge of the heavens, and, leaning over a cloud, bids them behold the spectacle of this little planet swarming with its absurdly near-sighted denizens.

Ohé la Renaissance! for this is to be the Age of Humour. We travail for the blithe rebirth of joy into the world. The Decadence, with its morbid personalities and accursed analysis of exotic emotion, is over, please God; yet we may adopt its methods and refine the simplicity of primary impulse, thus increasing the whole sum of pleasure with the delicate nuances that amplify the waves

of feeling. Hark, O my reader! Do you
not hear them, rising like overtones
and turning the melody into
a divine harmony?

The
Sense of
Humour

THE ROMANCE OF



The Game of Correspondence

THE receipt of a letter is no longer the event it was in the old stage-coach days; railways and the penny postage have robbed it of all excitement. One expects now one's little pile of white, blue and green envelopes beside one's plate at breakfast, along with one's toast and coffee, and one tastes its contents as one opens the matutinal egg. We have forgotten how to write interesting letters as we have forgotten how to fold and wafer a sheet of foolscap or sharpen a quill. Some of our missives are not even worth a cursory glance, many by no means deserve an answer, and most are speedily forgotten in the columns of the morning journal.

Yet, at times, on red-letter days, we find one amongst the number which demands epicurean perusal; it is not to be ripped open and devoured in haste, it insists on privacy and attention. This has a flavour which the salt of silence alone can bring out; a dash of interruption destroys its exquisite delicacy. More than this, it must be answered while it is still fresh and sparkling, after which, if it be of the true vintage, it can afford still another sip to inspire your postscript.

To your room then with this, and lock the door, or else save it for a more impregnable leisure. Open it daintily and entertain it with distinction and respect; efface any previous mood and hold yourself passive to its enchantment. It is no love message, and need depend upon no excited interest in the writer for its reception,

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for it has an intrinsic merit; it is the work of an artist; it is a fascinating move on the chess-board of the most alluring, most accessible game in the world.

The Game of Corre- spondence

Though the fire of such a letter need have neither the artificiality of flirtation nor the intensity of love, yet it must both light and warm the reader. It is not valuable for the news it brings, for if it be a work of art the tidings it bears are not so important as the telling of them. It must be sincere and alive, revealing and confessing, a letter more from the writer than to the reader, as if it were written in face of a mirror rather than before the photograph of the receiver; and yet the communication must be spelled in the cypher of your friendship, to which only you have the key. We have our separate languages, each with the other, and there are emotions we cannot duplicate. This missive is for you, and for you only, or it ranks with a business communication. It is minted thought, invested, put out at loan for a time, bringing back interest to stimulate new speculations. There are no superfluous words, for the master strikes a clean sharp blow, forging his mood all of a single piece, welding your whim to his, and, fusing his sentences, there glows a spirit, a quality of style that bears no affectation; it must not, of all things, become literary, it must be direct, not showing signs of operose polish. It must be writ in the native dialect of the heart.

If it be a risk to write frankly, it is one that gains interest in the same proportion; it makes the game the better sport. But after all, how many letters, so fearfully burned, so carefully hid away, but what, in after years, would seem innocuous? You are seduced by the moment, and your mood seems, and impulses seem, dangerous, incendiary. You grow perfervid in your indiscretion, not knowing

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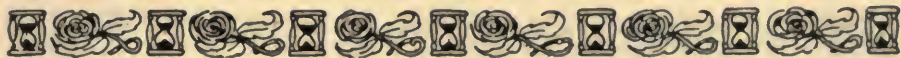
The Game of Corre- spondence

that the whole world is stirred by the same recklessness, and that each one is profoundly bored by all save his own yearnings. Not many of our epistles will bear the test of print on their own merit, expurgate them as you will; you need only fear, rather, that the letter will grow dull even before it reaches its destination. The best of them, moreover, are written in sympathetic ink, and unless your correspondent has the proper reagent at hand, the sheets will be empty or incomprehensible even to him. Answer speedily as you may, too, it will be hard to overtake your correspondent's mood; he has overburdened his mind, precipitated the solution, and is off to another experiment by the time his stamp is affixed. But you must do your best in return; reflect enough of his ray to show him he has shot straight, and then flash your own colour back.

There are virtues of omission and commission. It is not enough to answer questions; one must not add the active annoyance of apology to the passive offense of neglect. One must not hint at things untellable; one must give the crisp satisfaction of confidences wholly shared. Who has not received that dash of feminine inconsequence in the sentence, "I have just written you two long letters, and have torn them both up"? What letter could make up for such an exasperation? Your master letter-writer does not fear to stop when he is done, either, and a blank page at the end of the folio does not threaten his conscience.

If one has not the commonplace view of things, and escapes the obvious, it matters little whether one uses the telescope or the microscope. One may deal with the abstract or concrete, discuss philosophy and systems, or gild homely little common things till they shine and twinkle with joy. Indeed, the perfect letter-writer

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must do both, and change from the intensely subjective to the intensely objective point of view. He must, as it were, look you in the eye and hold you by the hand. Two masters whose letters have recently been printed may illustrate these two different phases of expression, though each could do both as well. And this first, from Browning's love letters, describes what the perfect letter should be:

The Game of Correspondence

“I persisted in not reading my letter in the presence of my friend. . . . I kept the letter in my hand, and only read it with those sapient ends of the fingers which the mesmerists make so much ado about, and which really did seem to touch a little of what was inside. Not *all*, however, happily for me! or my friend would have seen in my eyes what *they* did not see.”

To this, the twittering, delightful familiarities of Stevenson:

“Two Sundays ago the sad word was brought that the sow was out again; this time she had brought another in her flight. Moors and I and Fanny were strolling up to the garden, and there by the waterside we saw the black sow looking guilty. It seemed to me beyond words; but Fanny's *cri du cœur* was delicious. ‘G-r-r!’ she cried; ‘nobody loves you!’”

It was the same art in big and little, for each stripped off pretense and boldly revealed his moment's personality.

And yet, and yet, a letter does not depend upon any artistic quality or glib facility with words, for its interest. The one test of a letter is that it must bring the writer close to your side. You must fasten your mood on me, so that I shall be you for hours afterward. It sounds easy enough, but it is the most difficult thing in the world, to be one's self. “I long for you, I long for you so much that I thank God upon my knees that you are not here!” There, now, is a letter that promises well, but I dare not quote more of it, for the subject must be seen from another side.

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The Caste of the Articulate

FAIR or unfair though it be, I have come to accept a letter as the final test of the personality of a new acquaintance. Not of his or her intellect or moral worth, perhaps, but the register of that rare power which dominates all attributes — that peculiar aroma, flavour, *timbre*, or colour which makes some of our friends eternally exceptional. “Who dares classify him and label him, sins against the Holy Ghost; I, for one, think I know him only inasmuch as I refuse to sum him up. I cannot find his name in the dictionary; I cannot make a map of him; I cannot write his epitaph.” So writes Sonia of a friend with such a personality, and you will see by this that Sonia herself is of the caste of the Articulate.

We are influenced first by sight, then by sound, and, lastly, by the written word. “She spoke, and lo! her loveliness methought she damaged with her tongue!” is the description of many a woman who appeals to the eye alone. And in something the same way many who fascinate us with their glamour while face to face, shock us by the dreary commonplaceness of their letters.

It would seem that an interesting person must inevitably write an interesting letter,—indeed, that should be a part of the definition of the term interesting. But many decent folk are gagged with constraint and self-consciousness, and never seem to get free.

“I wonder,” says Little Sister, “whether these wordless folk may not, after all, really feel much more deeply than we who write?”

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That is a troublesome question, and in its very nature unanswerable, since the witnesses are dumb. No doubt they feel more simply and unquestioningly, for as soon as a thing is once said its opposite and contradictory side, as true and as necessary, reacts upon us.

The Caste of the Articulate

But it seems to me that expression does not so much depend upon any spiritual insight, or even upon especial training, as it does upon the capacity for being one's self frankly and simply. That is the only thing necessary to make the humblest person interesting, and yet nothing is so difficult as to be one's self in this wild, whirling world.

Expression is but another name for revelation. Unless one is willing to expose one's self like Lady Godiva, or protected only by such beauty and sincerity as hers, one can go but a little way in the direction of individuality. We must sacrifice ourselves at every turn, show good and bad alike, and laugh at ourselves too. "Would that mine enemy might write a book!" is no insignificant curse, and yet there are tepid, colourless authors who might hazard it with safety; no one would ever discover the element of personality.

"After our quarrel I felt as if I had a pebble in my shoe all day," Little Sister once wrote me. Let that be an example of the articulate manner, for by such vivid and homely metaphors she strews her pages. Did she reserve such phrases for her written words, I would feel bound to claim for letter-writing the distinction of being an art of itself, unrelated to any other faculty; but no, she talks in the same way — she is herself every moment. "My temper is violent and sudden, but it soon evaporates," she tells me; "it is like milk spilt on a hot stove."

The inspiration which impels one so to illustrate an abstract

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**The Caste
of the
Articulate** statement with a concrete example, illuminating and convincing, is a spark of the divine fire of personality. This is the *crux* of the articulate caste. An ounce of illustration is worth a pound of proof. Rob poetry of metaphor and it would be but prose; a simile, in verse, is usually merely ornament. The true purpose of tropes, however, is more virile and sustaining; they should reinforce logic, not decorate it. See how agilely Perilla can compress the whole history of a flirtation into six lines, defying the old saying that "there is nothing so difficult to relight as a dead love."

I thought I saw a stiffened form
A-lying in its shroud;
I looked again and saw it was
The love we once avowed.
"They told me you were dead!" I cried.
The corpse sat up and bowed!

When one has a few such acquaintances as these, books are superfluous. Who would read a dead romance when one can have it warm and living, vibrant, human, coming like instalments of a serial story, a perpetual revelation of character! Many pride themselves upon their proficiency in matter and many in manner,—there are those, even, who boast of mere quantity, but your professional writer is usually cool and calm, if not affected and pretentious. A letter, though, should be impregnate with living fire—it should boil. It is a treat of exceptional human nature. If the sentences be not spontaneous and unstudied the pleasure is lost. One may write fiery nonsense, but one must mean it at the time. One's mind must, as Sonia says, be hospitable, keep open house, and have the knack of making one's friends at home, to throb with one's own delights and

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despairs. One must give every mood open-handed, and mention nothing one may not say outright with gusto. But it is not everyone who can “bathe in rich, young feeling, and steep at day-dawning in green bedewed grasses” like my little Sonia. If I were dead she could still strike sparks out of me with her letters.

The Taste of the Articulate

“Oh, if you could only see my new hat! I’ve been sitting in fetish worship half the evening, and I’ll never dare tell how much I paid for it. You never need be good-looking under such a hat as that, for no one will ever see you!” Does not this quotation bring Little Sister very near to you, and make her very human and real? Ah, Little Sister is not afraid to be herself! She knows that she can do nothing better. “It’s a terrible handy thing to have a smashing adjective in your pocket,” she confesses. Little Sister has a good aim, too; she always hits my heart. And yet she acknowledges that “there are days when letters are blankly impossible.”

Such friends write the kind of letters that one keeps always, the kind that can be re-read without skipping. It is their own talk, their own lives, their own selves put up like fruit preserves of various flavours, moods and colours, warranted not to turn or spoil.

And as for the gagged, wordless folk, it is my opinion that too much sensibility has been accredited to them. To any rich exotic nature expression must come as a demand not to be refused. It is feeling bubbling over into words. Other souls are compressed and silent; they have the possibilities of the bud—something warm

and inspiring may at any time make them expand
and free them from the constraint—but there
is not much perfume until
the flower blooms.

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The Tyranny of the Lares

NO, I have never been tainted with a mania for collecting. It has never particularly interested me, because I already happened to have two of a kind, to possess a third. I prefer things to be different rather than alike, and the few things I really care for I like for themselves alone, and not because they are one of a family, set or series.

But there are so few things to be envious of, even then! After one's necessities are provided for, there are not many things worth possessing, and fewer still worth the struggle of collecting. Acquisition seems to rob most things of their intrinsic value, of the extreme desirability they seemed to possess, and yet it does not follow that the practice of collecting is not worth while. It is worth while for itself, but not for the things collected. It is like hunting. The enjoyment, to your true sportsman, does not depend entirely upon the game that is bagged. If the hunter went out solely for the purpose of obtaining food he would better go to the nearest poulturer.

We have a habit of associating the idea of pleasure with the possession of certain objects, and we fancy such pleasure is permanent. But in nine cases out of ten the enjoyment is effervescent, and the thing must be gazed at, touched and admired while the charm is new. Then only can one feel the sharp joy of possession, and, even though its value remain as an object of art, we must after that enjoy it impersonally; its delight must be shared with other spectators. As far as the satisfaction of ownership is concerned the

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thing is dead for us, and though we would not give it up, our greed gilds it but cheaply, after all.

The Tyranny of the Lares

Of all things, pictures are most commonly regarded as giving pleasure. A painting is universally regarded as a desirable possession of more or less value, according to personal appreciation. In fact, most men would say that a poor picture is better than none, since one of its recognized functions is to fill a space on the wall. And yet how few pictures are looked at once a day, or once a week. How many persons accept them only as decoration, as spots on the wall, and pass them by, in their familiarity, as unworthy of especial notice!

But the collection of a multitude of things is no great oppression if one is permanently installed; they pad out the comforts of life, they create "atmosphere"; they fill up spaces in the house as small talk fills up spaces in conversation. The first prospect of moving, however, brings this horde of stupid, useless, dead things to life, and they appear in their proper guise to strike terror into the heart of the owner. Pictures that have never been regarded, curiosities that are only curious, books that no longer feed the brain, and the thousand little knickknacks that accumulate in one's domicile and multiply like parasites—all the flotsam and jetsam of housekeeping must be individually attended to, and rejected or preserved piecemeal.

But that exciting decision! It is not till one has actually had the courage to destroy some once prized possession that one feels the first inspiring thrill of emancipation. Before, the Thing owned you; it had to be protected in its useless life, kept intact with care and attention. You were pledged to forestall dust, rust and pillage. If you yourself selected it, it stood as a tangible evidence of your cul-

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The Tyranny of the Laces ture, an ornament endorsed as art. The Thing forbade growth of taste or judgment, it became a changeless reproach. If it were a gift, it ruled you with a subtle tyranny, compelling your hypocrisy, enslaving you by chains of your very good nature. But if you do not falter, in one exquisite pang you are freed. The Thing is destroyed! Not given away, not hidden or disguised, but murdered outright. It is your sublime duty to yourself that demands the sacrifice.

These horrid monsters once put out of your life, and all necessity for their care annulled, you have so much more space for the few things whose quality remains permanent. You will guard the entrance to your domicile and jealously examine the qualifications of every article admitted. You will ask, "Is it absolutely necessary?" If so, then let it be as beautiful as possible, putting into its perfection of design the expense and care formerly bestowed on a dozen trifles. You will use gold instead of silver, linen instead of cotton, ivory in the place of celluloid; in short, whatever you use intimately and continually, whatever has a definite plausible excuse for existence, should be so beautiful that there is no need for objects which are merely ornamental.

It was so before machinery made everything possible, common and cheap; it has been so with every primitive civilization. To the unspoiled peasant, to all of sane and simple mind, ornaments have, in themselves, no reason for being. Pictures are unnecessary, because the true craftsman so elaborates and develops the constructive lines of his architecture that the decoration is organic and inherent. The many household utensils, vessels and implements of daily use were so appropriately formed, so graceful and elegant in their simplicity,

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so cunning of line, so quaint of form and pleasant of colour, that they were objects of art, and there was no need for the extraneous display of meaningless adornment.

The Tyranny of the Tares

Once you are possessed with this idea you will suddenly become aware of the tyranny of Things, and you will begin to dread becoming a slave to mere possessions. You may still enjoy and admire the possessions of others, but the ineffable bore of ownership will keep you content. The responsibility of proprietorship will strike you with terror, gifts will appal you, the opportunity of ridding yourself of one more unnecessary thing will be welcomed as another stroke for freedom. Your friends' houses will become your museums, and they the altruistic custodians, allowing you the unalloyed sweets of appreciation with none of the bitter responsibilities of possession.

For you, if you are of my kind, and would be free to fly light, flitting, gipsy fashion, wherever and whenever the whim calls, must not be anchored to an establishment. We must know and love our few possessions as a father knows his children. We must be able to pack them all in one box and follow them foot-loose. This is the new order of Friars Minor, modern Paulists who have renounced the possession of things, and by that vow of disinheritance, parting with the paltry delights of monopoly, have been given the roving privilege of the whole world!

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Costume and Custom

A FRIEND of mine has reduced his habit of dress to a system. Dressing has long been known to be a fine art, but this enthusiast's endeavour has been to make it a science as well—to give his theories practical application to the routine of daily life. To do this, he has given his coats and jackets all Anglo-Saxon names. His frock is called Albert, for instance, his morning coat Cedric, a grey tweed jacket, Arthur, and so on. His waistcoats masquerade under more poetic pseudonyms. A white piqué is known as Reginald, a spotted cashmere is Montmorency, and I have seen this eccentric in a wonderful plaid vest high Roulhac. His trousers and pantaloons are distinguished by family names; I need only mention such remarkable *aliases* as Braghampton, a striped cheviot garment, and a pair of tennis flannels denominated Smithers. His terminology includes also appellations by which he describes his neckwear—simple prefixes, such as “de” or “von” or “Mac” or “Fitz,” modifying the name of the waistcoat, and titles for his hats, varying from a simple “Sir” for a brown bowler to “Prince” for a silk topper of the season's block.

Now, my mythical friend is not such a fool as you might think by this description of his mania, for he is moved to this fantastic procedure by a psychological theory. The gentleman is a private, if not a public, benefactor, the joy of his friends and delight of his whole acquaintance, for, never in the course of their experience, has he ever appeared twice in exactly the same costume. It may differ

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from some previous habilitation only by the tint of his gloves, but the change is there with its subtle suggestion of newness. Indeed, this sartorial dilettante prides himself, not so much upon the fact that his raiment is never duplicated in combination, as that the changes are so slight as not to be noticed without careful analysis. His maxim is that clothes should not call attention to themselves either by their splendour or their variety, but that the effect should be upon the emotions rather than upon the eye. He holds that it should never be particularly noticed whether a man dresses much or dresses well, but that the impression should be of an immortal freshness, sustaining the confidence of his friends that his garb shall have a pleasing note of composition.

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It is to accomplish this that he has adopted the mnemonic system by which to remember his changing combinations. He has but to say to his valet: "Muggins, this morning you may introduce Earl Edgar von Courtenay Blenkinsopp," and his man, familiar with the nomenclature of the wardrobe, will, after his master has been bathed, shaved and breakfasted, clothe the artist accordingly in Panama hat, sack coat, cheerful fawn waistcoat, a tender heliotrope scarf and pin-check trousers. Or perhaps, looking over the calendar, the man may announce that this fantastic Earl has already appeared at the club, in which case a manipulation of the tie or waistcoat changes von Courtenay to O'Anstruther. The Earl must not, according to the rules, appear twice in his full complement of costume. His existence is but for a day, but Anstruther, the merry corduroy vest, may become a part of many personalities.

So much for my friend Rigamarole, who does, if you like, carry his principles to an extreme; but surely we owe it to our friends that

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our clothes shall please. It is as necessary as that we should have clean faces and proper nails. But, more than this, we owe it to ourselves that we shall not be known by any hackneyed, unvarying garb. It need not be taken for granted that we shall wear brown or blue, we should not become identified with a special shape of collar. Servants must wear a prescribed livery, priests must always appear clad in the cloth of their office, and the soldier must be content with and proud of his uniform, but free men are not forced to inflict a permanent visual impression upon their fellows. He must follow the habit and style of the day, be of his own class and period, and yet, besides, if he can, be himself always characteristic, while always presenting a novel aspect. It is as necessary for a man as for a woman, and, though the elements which he may combine are fewer, they are capable of a certain kaleidoscopic effect.

Our time is cursed more than any other has been, perhaps, with hard and fast rules for men's costume; and of all clothing, evening dress, in which, in the old days, was granted the greatest freedom of choice, is now subject to the most rigid prescription. We must all appear like waiters at dinner, but daylight allows tiny licences. Perhaps our garments are always darkest just before dawn, and the new century may emancipate men's personal taste. So far, at least, we may go: a frock coat does not compel a tie of any particular colour, and a morning coat does not invariably forbid a certain subdued animation in the way of waistcoats. We may already choose between at least three styles of collar and yet be received at five o'clock, and coloured shirts are making a hard fight to oust the white linen which has reigned for more than half a hundred years. It takes no great

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wealth to take advantage of these minor opportunities, nor need one be pronounced a fop if one uses one's chances well. He is safest who wears only what the best tailor has advised every other of his customers, but who cares for a tailor's model? Who cares, I might add, to be safe? There is safety in numbers, but who ever remembers or cares for the victims of such commonplace discretion? We are men, not mice; why should our coats be all of the same fashionable hue and of the same length of tail?

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But the times are changing, and we may look forward with confident hope to the renascence of colour. Already we may see the signs of the change that is approaching. God forbid that men should become the dandies of the Regency, that we should ever ape the incredible or go without pockets, but we may pray heartily for the wedding of Art and Reason. Let us pray we shall no more wear cylinders or cap our skulls with tight-fitting boxes! Meanwhile,

I fear I must buy another necktie, for my only one
is well worn out. And Celestine swears
she can recognize that blue
serge suit of mine, clear
across the Park!

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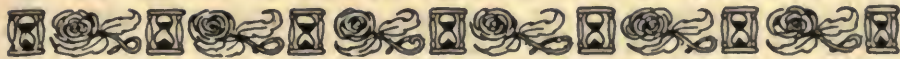
Old Friends and New

OLD FRIENDS, we say, are best, when some sudden disillusionment shakes our faith in a new comrade. So indeed they are, yet I count many newly made ties as stronger than those of my youth. "Keep close and hold my hand; I am afraid, for an old friend is coming!" Celestine once whispered to me while our love was young. How well I understood her panic! She was swung by the conflicting emotions of loyalty and oppression; her old friend had rights, but her new friend had privileges. With me, a stranger, she was frankly herself; with him, a familiar, she must be what he expected of her.

How shall we arrange the order of precedence for the late and early comers into our hearts? How shall we adjudicate their conflicting claims? That is the problem to be answered by everyone who lives widely, and who would not have writ upon his gravestone: "He made more friends than he could keep!" Were one content to pass from flower to flower it would be easy enough, but I would gather a full, fragrant and harmonious bouquet for my delight.

To one sensitively loyal, each new friend must at first sight seem to come as a robber to steal a fragment of his heart from its rightful owner. We say, "Make many acquaintances but few friends," we swear undying devotion, and we promise to write every week; but, if we practice this reserve, this fastidious partiality and this exclusive attention, how shall we grow and increase in worth, and how shall the Brotherhood of Man be brought about?

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We may think that each friend has his own place and is unique, satisfying some especial part of our nature; each to be kept separate in his niche, the saint to whom we turn for sympathy in those matters wherein we have vowed him our confidences. We may satisfy our consciences by giving to each the same number of candles, and by a religious celebration of each Saint's day, keeping the calendar of our devotions independent and exclusive, but this method does not make for growth. It is our duty to help knit Society together, to modify extremes, to transmit and transform affection. Surely there is love enough for all, and the more we give the more we shall have to give to our friends, whether they be old or new.

Old
Friends and
New

Friendship is, however, a matter of caste. With just as many as share our point of view or can understand it, who laugh at the things we laugh at, who are tempted by our temptations and sin our sins, can we have a divine fellowship. Through these to others outside of our ken, through friend to friend's friend the tie passes that shall bind the whole world together at last.

Our set of friends is a solar system, a cluster of planets, that, revolving about us, moves with the same trend through space and time. Each member of the fraternity has its own aphelion and perihelion, occultation and transit. Whether they are visible or invisible, we must be sure that each in due season will return to the same relative position and exert the same attraction, answering the law of gravity that in true friendship keeps them in their orbits about us. But the circles interlace, and in that is the possibility of keeping the unity of our constellation of friends. Were the same comrades to accompany us unceasingly we could not develop. There

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Old must be an intricate complication of actions and reactions, and we must be affected by each in turn and in combination.

New What is a parting from a friend but a departure in quest of new experience? Each fresh meeting, therefore, should be the sharing of the fruits that both have gathered, that each may profit by the contribution. If you tell me of a book you have read, I am amused and profited by the knowledge you bring me; shall I not be grateful to you for what you bring from an interesting person? If every new friend contributes to our development and enriches us by his personality, not only are we the better for it ourselves, but more worth while to our friends. It is not you as you are whom I love best, but you as you shall be when, in due time, you have come to your perfect stature; wherefore I shall not begrudge the loan of you to those who have set you on the way.

Though we may hold one friend paramount over all others, and admit him to every phase of intimacy, there are minor confidences that are often most possible with an entire stranger. Were we to meet a man of the Sixteenth Century, what could we not tell such an impersonal questioner! What would we care for the little mortifications that come between even the best of friends? We could confess faults and embarrassments without shame, we could share every hope and doubt without fear, for he would regard us without bias or prejudice. He could scourge us with no whip of conventional morality, and he would be able to judge any action of itself, hampered by no code or creed.

We had a game once, my sister and I, in which we agreed to look at each other suddenly, newly, as if we had never met before. Frequently we were able to catch a novel phase of character,

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and our sub-conscious self, freed from the servitude of custom, bounded in a new emotion. Could we, in this way, at times regard our friends, how much we might learn! We fall into the habit of seeing what we look for, and we compel old friends to live up to the preconception. Why not look at them, occasionally, as strangers to be studied and learned? There are two variable quantities in the equation of friendship, Yourself and Myself. Nor is our relation itself fixed; it is alive and changing from hour to hour. There is no such thing as an unalterable friendship, for both parties to the affair are moving at different speeds, first one and then the other ahead, giving a hand to be helped on and reaching back to assist. Might we not, indeed, reverse the previous experiment and regard any stranger as a blood relative, assuming a fraternity of interest? We need only to be honest and kind.

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By these two processes we may keep old friends and make new ones; and our conscience shall acquit us of disloyalty. When one enlarges one's establishment, one does not decrease either the wages or the duties of the servants before employed. The new members of the household have new functions. More is given and more is received. But it is not so much that one must give more as that one should give wisely and economically, we must be generous in quality rather than in quantity; for, though there is love enough to go round for all, there is not time enough for most of us. We must clasp hands, give the message and pass on, trusting to meet again on the journey, and come to the same inn at nightfall.

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A Defense of Slang

COULD Shakespeare come to Chicago and listen curiously to "the man in the street," he would find himself more at home than in London. In the mouths of messenger boys and clerks he would find the English language used with all the freedom of unexpected metaphor and the plastic, suggestive diction that was the privilege of the Elizabethan dramatists; he would say, no doubt, that he had found a nation of poets. There was hardly any such thing as slang in his day, for no graphic trope was too virile or uncommon for acceptance, if its meaning were patent. His own heroes (and heroines, too, for Rosalind's talk was as forcible in figures of speech as any modern American's) often spoke what corresponds to the slang of today.

The word, indeed, needs precise definition, before we condemn all unconventional talk with opprobrium. Slang has been called "poetry in the rough," and it is not all coarse or vulgar. There is a prosaic as well as a poetic license. The man in the street calls a charming girl, for instance, a "daisy." Surely this is not inelegant, and such a reference will be understood a century hence without a foot-note. Slang, to prove adjuvant to our speech, which is growing more and more rigid and conventional, should be terse; it should make for force and clarity, without any sacrifice of beauty. Still, manner should befit matter; the American "dude" is, perhaps, no more unpleasant a word than the emasculated fop it described. The English "bounder" is too useful an appellation to do without in

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London, and, were that meretricious creature of pretence and fancy waistcoat more common in the United States, the term would be welcomed to American slang with enthusiasm. New York, alas, has already produced "cads," but no Yankee school would ever tolerate a "fag." A Defense
of Slang

The mere substitution of a single synonymous term, however, is not characteristic of American slang. Your Chicago messenger boy coins metaphorical phrases with the facility of a primitive savage. A figure of speech once started and come into popular acceptance changes from day to day by paraphrase, and, so long as a trace of the original significance is apparent, the personal variation is comprehensible, not only to the masses, but generally to those whose purism eschews the use of the common talk. Thus, to give "the glassy eye" became the colloquial equivalent of receiving a cool reception. The man on the street, inventive and jocose, does not stop at this. At his caprice it becomes giving "the frozen face" or even "the marble heart." In the same way one may hear a garrulous person spoken of as "talking to beat the band," an obvious metaphor; or, later, "to beat the cars."

The only parallel to this in England is the "rhyming slang" of the costers, and the thieves' "patter." There a railway guard may be facetiously termed a "Christmas card," and then abbreviated to "card" alone, thence to permutations not easily traced. But English slang is, for the most part, confined to the "masses," and is an incomprehensible jargon to all else save those who make an especial study of the subject. One may sit behind a bus driver from the Bank to Fulham, and understand hardly a sentence of his colloquies and gibes at the passing fraternity, but though the language of the

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trolley conductor of Chicago is as racy and spirited, it needs less translation. The American will, it is true, be enigmatic at times; you must put two and two together. You must reduce his trope to its lowest terms, but common sense will simplify it.

It is not an empirical, arbitrary wit depending upon a music-hall song for its origin. I was riding on a Broadway car one day when a semi-intoxicated individual got on, and muttered unintelligibly, "Put me off at Brphclwknd Street, please." I turned to the conductor and asked, "What did he want?" The official smiled. "You can search me!" he said, in denial of any possession of apprehension.

Slang in America, then, is expression on trial; if it fits a hitherto unfurnished want it achieves a certain acceptance. But it is a frothy compound, and the bubbles break when the necessity of the hour is past, so that much of it is evanescent. Some of the older inventions remain, such as "bunco" and "lynch" and "chestnut," but whole phrases lose their snap like uncorked champagne, though they give their stimulant at the proper timely moment. Like the eggs of the codfish, one survives and matures, while a million perish. The "observed of all observers" (Ophelia's delicate slang, observe) was, yesterday, in New York "the main Guy," a term whose appositeness would be easily understood in London, where the fall of the Gunpowder Plot is still celebrated. Later, in Chicago, according to George Ade, a modern authority, it became the "main squeeze," and another permutation rendered the phrase useless. It is this facility of change that makes most slang spoil in crossing the Atlantic. On the other side, English slang is of so esoteric an origin and reference, that no Yankee can translate or adopt it. It is drop-forged and rigid, an empiric use of

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words to express humour. What Englishman, indeed, could trace the derivation of "balmy on the crumpet" as meaning what the American would term "dotty" or "bug-house," unless he was actually present at the music hall where it was first invented?

A Defense of Slang

We have at least three native languages to learn—the colloquial, the literary prose, and the separate vocabulary of poetry. In America slang makes a fourth, and it has come to be that we feel it as incongruous to use slang on the printed page as it is to use "said he" or "she replied with a smile" in conversation, and, except for a few poets, such words as "haply," "welkin," or "beauteous" in prose. Yet Stevenson himself, the purist who avoids foreign words, uses Scotch which nearly approaches slang, for there is little difference between words of an unwritten dialect and slang, such as "scrannel" and "widdershins"; while Wilkie Collins writes "wyte," "wanion," "kittle," "gar," and "collop" in with English sentences, as doubtless many questionable words of today will be honoured in the future.

Slang, the illegitimate sister of Poetry, makes with her a common cause against the utilitarian economy of Prose. Both stand for lavish luxuriance in trope and involution, for floriation and adornment of thought. It is their boast to make two words grow where but one grew before. Both garb themselves in metaphor, and the only complaint of the captious can be that whereas Poetry follows the accepted style, Slang dresses her thought to suit herself in fantastic and bizarre caprices—that her whims are unstable and too often in bad taste.

But this odium given to slang by superficial minds is undeserved. In other days, before the language was crystallized into

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the verbiage and idiom of the doctrinaire, prose, too, was untrammelled. A cursory glance at the Elizabethan poets discloses a kinship with the rebellious fancies of our modern common colloquial talk. For gargarism, scarab, quodling, puckfist, scroyle, foist, pumpkin, trindle-tale, comroque, pigsbones, and ding-dong, we may now read chump, scab, chaw, yap, fake, bloke, pal, bad-actor, and so on. "She's a delicate dab-chick!" says Ben Jonson; "she had all the component parts of a peach," says George Ade.

It will be seen that slang has two characteristics—humour and force. Brevity is not always the soul of wit, for today we find amusement in the euphuisms that, in the sixteenth century were taken in all seriousness. The circumlocutions will drop speedily out of use, but the more apt and adequate neologisms tend to improve literary style. For every hundred times slang attributes a new meaning to an old word, it creates once or twice a new word for an old meaning. Many hybrids will grow, some flower and a few seed. So it is with slang.

There is a "gentleman's slang," as Thackeray said, and there is the impossible kind; but of the bulk of the American product, the worst to be said of it usually is that it is homely and extravagant. None the less is it a picturesque element that spices the language with enthusiasm. It is antiseptic and prevents the decay of virility. Literary style is but an individual, glorified slang. It is not impossible for the artist; it went to its extreme in the abandon of Ben Jonson, Webster, and Beaumont and Fletcher, but, as your Cockney would say, "It does take a bit of doin'" nowadays.

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The Charms of Imperfection

FOR a long time I have held a stubborn belief that I should admire and aim at perfection. I admitted its impossibility, of course; I attributed my friends' failure to achieve it as a charming evidence of their humanity, but it seemed to me to be a thing most properly to be desired. And yet, upon thinking it over, I was often astonished by the discovery that most of my delights were caused by a divergence from this ideal. "A sweete disorder in the dress kindleth in cloathes a wantonness!"

Now, is this because I am naturally perverse, and enjoy the bizarre, the unique and the grotesque? Is it because of my frailty that I take a dear delight in signs of our common humanity, in the petty faults and foibles of the world? Or is it because I have misinterpreted this ideal of perfection, and have thought it necessary or proper to worship a conventional criterion? Celestine and I have been puckering our brows for a week over the problem!

We have learned, after a quarter of a century's experience with the turning lathe and fret saw, to turn back for lasting joy to hand-made work. We delight in the minor irregularities of a carving, for instance, recognizing that behind that slip of the tool there was a man at work; a man with a soul, striving for expression. The dreary, methodical uniformity of machine-made decoration and furniture wearies our new enlightened taste. Mathematical accuracy and "spirit" seem to be mutually exclusive, and we have been taught by the modern Æsthetic almost to regard amateurishness as a sure proof

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of sincerity. We cannot associate the abandon and naïve enthusiasm of the pre-Raphaelites with the technical proficiency of the later Renaissance, and Botticelli stands, not only for the spirit dominating and shining through the substance but, in a way, for the incompatibility of perfect idealization with perfect execution. And yet this conflict troubles us. We feel that the two should be wedded, so that the legitimate offspring might be perfection; but when perfect technique is attained, as in a Japanese carving, the result is almost as devoid of human feeling and warmth as a machine-made product.

We feel this instinctive choice of irregularity wherever we turn—wherever, that is, we have to do with humanity or human achievement. We do not, it is true, delight in the flaw in the diamond, but elsewhere we are in perpetual conflict with nature, whose sole object seems to be the obliteration of extremes and the ultimate establishment of a happy medium of uniformity. We find perfection cold and lifeless in the human face. I doubt if a woman has ever been loved for an absolute regularity of feature; but how many, like little Celestine, who acknowledges herself that her nose is too crooked, her eyes too hazel, and her mouth too large, are bewilderingly charming on that very account! These features go to make up an expression, which, if it is not perfect, is certainly not to be accounted for by merely adding up the items. It is a case where the whole is greater than the sum of all its parts. We admire the anatomy and poise of the Greek statues, but they are not humanly interesting. Indeed, they were never meant to be, for they are divinities, and the symbols of an inaccessible perfection.

Still, while we speak of certain faults as being adorable (notably feminine weaknesses), while we make the trite remark anent a man's

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“one redeeming vice,” while we shrink from natures too chaste, too aloof from human temptation, too uncompromising, yet we must feel a pang of conscience. We are not living up to our ideals. Is it the mere reaction from the impositions of conventional morality? I think not. It is a miscomprehension of the term perfection.

The Charms of Imperfection

The Buddhist believes in a process of spiritual evolution that, tending ever toward perfection, finally reaches the state of Nirvana, where the individual soul is merged into the Infinite. How can it be differentiated from the universal spirit if it has attained all the attributes of divinity? And that idea seems to be the basis of our mistaken worship of perfection—a Nirvana where each thing, being absolutely perfect, loses every distinguishing mark of character. But is not our Christian, or even the Pagan, ideal higher than this? For even the Greek gods, cold and exquisite as they were, had each his individuality, his character, his separate function. Our conception of Heaven, if it is ever formulated nowadays, has this differentiation of individuality strongly accented; though the most orthodox may insist that the spirits of the blessed are sanctified with perfection, yet he does not hold it as a necessary dogma that they are therefore all alike, and recast in a common mould. He still dares believe in that infinite variety which Nature has taught us persists throughout the universe.

This is the fundamental difference between the Oriental and the Occidental point of view. We moderns stand for the supremacy of character, an ineradicable distinction between human beings which evolution and growth does not diminish, but develops. We believe, you and I, that in a million æons we shall be as different one from the other as we are now; that faults may be eradicated, weaknesses

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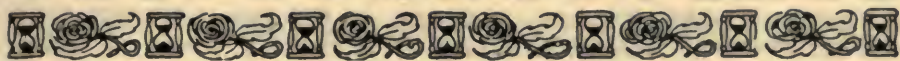
The lose their hold, but that our best parts will increase in
Charms of virtue, not approaching some theoretical standard, but
Imperfection always and forever nearing that standard which is set
for ourselves.

We have grown out of our admiration for the "copper-plate hand" in penmanship; we recognize the fact now, that we need not so much follow the specimens in the copy-book as to make the best of what is distinctive in our own style of writing. And this is a type of what our conception of perfection, perhaps, should be. Everything should be significant of character, should supplement it, translate it, explain it. In the Japanese prints you will find almost every face with the same meaningless expression, every feature calm, disguising every symptom of individuality. It is the Oriental pose, the Oriental ideal just mentioned. It is not considered proper to express either joy or sorrow, and the perfection of poise is a sublime indifference.

And I have a final idea that may, to a more subtle student of Æsthetic, seem suggestive. In the beautiful parabola described by the mounting and descending sky-rocket the upward and downward path are not quite parallel. The stick does not drop vertically, although it continually approaches that direction. In other words, the curve, constantly approaching a straight line, is beautiful despite, and, indeed, perhaps *because* it never quite attains that rectilinear perfection and keeps its distinctive character to the end.

It is beautiful in its whole progress,
for that path defines the curve
of the parabola.

THE COMMONPLACE



“The Play’s the Thing”

WOULD you rather see a good play performed by poor actors, or a poor play done by good actors?” asked Celestine.

As a professor of the romantic view of life and a “ghost-seer,” there is but one answer to the question. “The play’s the thing!” Acting is at best a secondary art—an art, that is, of interpretation, though we as critics judge it of itself alone. But, to an idealist, no play ever is, or can be, perfectly performed. As we accept the conventions of stage carpentry, impossible cottages, flat trees, “property” rocks, misfit costumes and tinsel ornament, so we must gloss over the imperfections of the players, and accept their struttings and mouthings as the fantastic accessories of stage-land. No actor that ever lived ever acted throughout a whole drama as a sane human being would act. We are used to thinking the contrary, but the compression of time and space prevents verisimilitude. A play is not supposed to simulate life except by an established convention. Every art has its medium and its limitation. It is indeed a limitation that makes art possible. In the drama the limitation is the use of the time element.

The play’s the thing—we may read it from the book or have it recited before the footlights, but the lasting delight is the charm of plot that, with the frail assistance of the actor, finds its way to our emotions. A good play done by poor actors, then, for me, if I must choose between the two evils.

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“The
Play’s the
Thing”

Fancy creates; imagination constructs. The child, sporting ingenuously with both these powers, dwells in a world of his own, either induced by his mastering fiat, or remodelled nearer to his heart’s desire from the rags and fragments at hand. In his toy theatre alone is the perfect play produced, for there imagination is stage manager, and has the hosts of Wonderland in his cast. The child is the only perfect romanticist. He has the keen, fresh eye upon nature; all is play, and the critical faculty is not yet aroused. So in a way, too, was all primitive drama. The audience at Shakespearean plays heard but noble poesies, saw but a virile dream made partly visible, like a ghost beckoning away their thoughts. So, even today, is the Chinese theatre, with its hundreds of arbitrary conventions, its lack of scenery, and its artificial eloquence. The veriest coolie knows that a painted face (a white nose, stripes and crosses on the cheeks) does but portray a masked intention, as if the actor bore a placard writ with the word “Villain.” Forthwith, all the rest is faery. The player does but lightly guide the rein, and Pegasus soars free.

So no play can be perfectly performed. We have created an artificial standard of realism, and we say that Bernhardt, Duse and Coquelin portray emotion with consummate art. It has been agreed by authorities on Æsthetic that simulated passion surpasses in suggestive power real emotion. The actor must not “lose himself in his part”—he must maintain the objective relation. None the less, however, must we, as audience, supply imagination to extend the play from art to life. From a romantic point of view, such devotion to realism is unnecessary. We are swayed by the wildest absurdities of melodrama, alike false to life and false to art, and we accept the operas of Wagner, with all their pasteboard dragons and bull-necked

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heroes belching forth technique, as impressive stimuli to the imagination. Even through such crude means, uplifted either by passionate brotherhood or upon the wings of song, we are wafted far and fast. The play, oh! the play's the thing!

“The
Play's the
Thing”

For see! If you prefer the bad play performed by the good actors, why not go to life itself? What else, indeed, *is* life? It was the old Duke in Lewis Carroll's “Sylvie and Bruno” who first pointed this out. All the world's a stage where are performed the worst of badly constructed plays—plays with neither unity nor sequence nor climax, but performed with absolute perfection. Why waste your time cursing the Adelphi, when, like the Duke, you can see the perfect art of the street? The railway porter's dialect is still convincing. The fat woman with her screaming children may enter at any minute, with her touches of wonderful realism. If you go to the theatre for acting you go to the wrong place! Watch the Pont Neuf for the despairing suicide, lurk in Whitechapel, visit in May-fair, coquette with a Spaniard's sweetheart, or rob a Jew, strike an Englishman, love an American girl, flirt with a French countess, or watch a Samoan beauty at the salt pools catching fish; but try not to find perfect acting behind a row of footlights!

But if, after all, the play's the thing, it is as much a mistake to look for real drama upon the street. There everything is incomplete, and, for the satisfaction of our æsthetic sense, we require the threads to be brought together, and the pattern developed, the knots tied. Our contemplation of life is usually analytic; we delight in discovering motives, elementary passions, traits of character and human nature. Our joy in art, on the other hand, arises from synthesis; we love to see effect follow cause, and events march logically,

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“The
Play’s the
Thing”

passions work themselves out, the triumph of virtue and justice. Life, as we see it, is a series of photographs. The drama presents these successively as in a biograph, with all the insignificant intermediary glimpses removed. We hunger for the finished story, the poem with the envoy. For this reason we have the drama and the novel.

And now Celestine asks me, “Would you rather read a good story poorly written than a poor story well written?”

The question is as fair as the other, though not quite in the same case. We may agree that acting is a secondary art, but literature has more dignified claims to considerations. Here we are contemplating a wedding of two arts, not the employment of one by another. One might as well say, then, “Would you rather see a good man married to a bad woman or the reverse?” It is the critic who attempts always to divorce the two.

Yet, as in almost all marriage, where two arts work together one is usually the more important. One may have one’s preferences, but the selection of that art which embodies an idea, rather than the one which aims at an interpretation, marks the romanticist’s point of view. One art must be masculine, creative, and the other feminine and adorning. The glory of the one is strength, of the other beauty. For me, then, the manly choice. Give me the good story badly told, the fine song poorly sung, the virile design clumsily carved, rather than the opposite cases. The necessity of such a choice is not a mere whim of Celestine’s; it is a problem we are forced to confront every day. We must take sides. It is not often, even from the Philistine’s point of view, that we have the good thing well done, while the poor thing badly done we have everywhere. Between

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these limits of perfection and hopelessness, then, lies our every-day world of art, and there continually we must make our choice.

If we could deal with abstractions, there would be no question at all, and undoubtedly we would all prefer to enjoy the disincarnate ideal rather than any incomplete embodiment, no matter how praiseworthy the presentment. But few of us are good enough musicians to hear the music in our mind's ear when we look over the score of an opera; few of us can dream whole romances like Dumas, without putting pen to paper; few, even, can long remember the blended glories of a sunset. We must have some tangible sign to lure back memory and imagination, and if we recognize the fact that such symbols are symbols merely, conventions without intrinsic value as art, then we have the eyes of the child and the romantic view of life.

And lastly, Celestine leaned to me in her green kimono and said, "Would you rather see a pretty girl in an ugly gown, or an ugly girl in a pretty gown?"

Ah, one does not need to hold the romantic view of life to answer that question!

**"The
Play's the
Thing"**

THE ROMANCE OF



Living Alone

I HAVE lived so long alone now, that it seems almost as if there were two of me—one who goes out to see friends, transacts business and buys things, and one who returns, dons more comfortable raiment, lights a pipe, and dreams. One the world knows, the other no one knows but the flies on the wall.

I keep no pets, since these would enforce my keeping regular hours; the only familiars I have, therefore, are my clock, my fire and my candles, and how companionable these may become one does not know who does not live alone. They owe me the debt of life, and repay it each in its own way, faithfully and apparently willingly. I have a lamp, too; but a lamp is a dull thing, especially when half-filled, and this one bores me. I might count my typewriter, also, but she is too strenuous, and she makes me too impatient by her inability to spell. Besides, the clock, fire and candles may, with no great stretch of the imagination, be readily conceived to have volition, and, once started, they contribute not a little to relieving the tedium of living alone.

My clock is always the same; it has no surprises. It may go a bit fast or slow, but it has a maddeningly accurate conscience, and its fidelity in ringing the eight-o'clock alarm proves it inhuman. Still, it lives and moves, beating a sober accompaniment to my thoughts. Altogether, it is not unlike a faithful, conscientious servant, never obtrusive, always punctual and obedient, but with an unremitting devotion to orders that is at times exasperating. Many a man

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has stood in fear and shame of his valet, and so I look askance furtively with a suppressed curse when the hands point to my bath, my luncheon, or my sortie into town. It would be a relief, sometimes, if my clock stopped, were I not sure that it would be my fault.

Living Alone

But my fire is more feminine, full of moods and whims, ardent, domestic and inspiring. Now, a fire, like a woman, should be something besides beautiful, though in many houses the hearth is a mere accessory. It should have other uses than to provide mere warmth, though this is often its sole reason for being. Nor should it be a mere culinary necessity, though I have known open fires to be kindled for that alone, and treated as domestic servants. In my house the fire has all these functions and more, for it is my friend and has consoled many lonely moments. It is a mistress, full of unexpected fancies and vagaries. It has, too, a more sacred quality, for it is an altar where I burn the incense of memory and sacrifice to the gods of the future. It is both human and divine, a tool and symbol at once.

No one, I think, can know how much of all this a fire can be, who has not himself laid, lighted and kindled and coaxed it, who has not utilized its services and accepted its consolations. My fire is, however, often a jealous mistress. She warms me and makes my heart glad, but I dare not leave her side on a wintry day. I must keep well within bounds, hold her hand or be chilled. I need but little urging! I pull up my couch, take pencil and paper, and she twinkles and purrs by my side, casting flickering glances at me as I work.

Not till the flames die down and the coals glow soberly red do I find the more practical pleasures of friendship and housewifely service. Now my fire plays the part of cook, and, in her proper sphere,

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Living Alone

outdoes every stove or range ever lighted. A little duck laid gently across the grate, the kettle whistling with steam, and the coffee-pot ready—what bachelor was ever attended by more charming handmaiden than I by my little open fire? She will heat an iron or shaving-water as gracefully, too, waiting upon me with a jocund willingness. No servant could be so companionable. Still, she must be humoured as one must always humour a woman. Try to drive her, or make her feel that she is but a slave, and you shall see how quickly she resents it. There is a psychological moment for broiling on an open fire, and postponement is fatal. It takes a world of petting and poking to sooth her caprice when she is in a blazing temper, but remember her sex, and she melts in a glow like a mollified child.

Kindling and lighting my fire is a ritual. I cannot go about it thoughtlessly or without excitement. The birth of the first curling flame inspires me, for the heart becomes an altar sacred to the household gods. If the day offers the least plausible pretext for a fire, I light one and sit down in worship. I resent a warm morning, when economy struggles with desire. Luckily my studio is at the north of the house, and, no matter if the sun is warm abroad, there is a cool corner waiting where a fire needs no apology. The sun creeps in toward noon and puts out the flames, but all the morning I enjoy the blaze.

In the evening the fire becomes absolutely necessary, and provides both heat and light, giving a new life of its own to the darkness of the room. Then I become a Parsee, put on my sacerdotal robes (for such lonely priestcraft requires costume), and fall into a reverie. For my sacrifices, old letters feed the flames. They say that

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coal, in burning, gives back the stored sunlight of past ages. What lost fires burn, then, when love-letters go up in smoke to illumine for one brief, last instant the shadows of memory!

Living Alone

My candles partake of the nature of both clock and fire. They are to be depended upon, when let alone, to burn just six hours, marking the time like the ticking pendulum, but they give light and warmth, too, in their own way, in gentle imitation of the fire. They also have moods—less petulant than the fire's—but they require as little attention as the clock. The fire seems immortal; though the coals fade into ashes, the morning's resurrection seems to continue the same personality, and the same flames seem to be incarnated—living again the same old life. But the life of a candle seems visibly limited to a definite space of time, and its end is clearly to be seen. In that aspect it seems more human and lovable than the fire—a candle is more like a petted animal, whose short life seems to lead to nothing beyond. We may put more coals on the fire, and continue its existence indefinitely, but the candle is doomed. Putting another one in the socket does not renew a previous existence. But, if it is a short life, it is a merry one, and its service is glad and generous. My little army of candles is constantly being replenished. Like brave and loyal soldiers, they lay down their lives gallantly in my cause, and new ones fill up the vacant ranks, fighting the powers of darkness.

This is my bachelor reverie. But high noon approaches, and my metamorphosis is at hand. Now the sun has struck the fire-place with a lance of light, and I, that other I, must rise, dress and out into the world!

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Cartomania

WITH something of the excitement Alice felt when she crawled through the looking-glass, I used to pore over my atlas. Geography was for me a pastime rather than a study. There was one page in the book where the huge bulging expanse of the United States lay, and there, on the extreme left hand of the vari-coloured patchwork of States and territories, was the abode of romance and adventure—a long and narrow patch tinted pink, curving with the Pacific Ocean, and ribbed with the fuzzy haschures of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. This was the Ultima Thule of my dreams, beyond which my sober-minded hopes dared not stray.

Further on in the book I saw Europe, irregular with ragged peninsulas and bays, Asia, vast and shapeless, with the great blue stretch of Siberia atop, and the clumsy barren yellow triangle of Africa. But these foreign countries were, to my young imagination, as inaccessible as Fairyland; they did not properly come into the world of possibility. They were as unreal as ghosts, remote as the Feudal Ages, and I put them by with a sigh as hopeless. The world is a big place to the eyes of a child, and all beyond his ken but names. How could I know that the end of the century was even then whirling me toward wonders that even my Arabian Magi would not have thought possible? But today, in this far Western town, then but a semi-barbarous camp of gold miners, I have seen an airship half-completed upon the stocks, and this morning, in my

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own room, I rang up Celestine and talked with her over the wire a hundred miles away!

Maps were my favourite playgrounds, and so real were they that it almost seemed that, with a sufficiently powerful microscope, I might see the very inhabitants living their strangely costumed customs. There was a black dot on my fascinating pink patch marked San Francisco, and now, that dream come true, I try to see this city with the eyes of my childhood, and wonder that I am really here. To get the strangeness of the chance I have to think back and back till I see that map stretched out before the boy, and follow his finger across the tiers of States that run from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

**Carto-
mania**

Everyone who has not travelled much must feel the excitement that maps give when intently studied. No one has been everywhere, and for each some unvisited spot must charm him with its romantic possibilities. But there are certain cities almost universally enticing to the imagination—the world's great meeting-places, where, if one but waits long enough, one can find anybody. London, Cairo, Bombay, Hongkong, San Francisco, New York—these are the jewels upon the girdle that surrounds the globe. To know these places is to have lived to the full limit of Anglo-Saxon privilege.

But the true cartomaniac is not content with ready-made countries; he must build his own lands. How many kingdoms and empires have I not drawn from the tip of my pencil! Now, the achievement of a plausible state is not so easy as it might appear. There is nothing so difficult as to create, out of hand, an interesting coast line. Try and invent an irregular shore that shall be convincing, and you will see how much more cleverly Nature works than you. Here is where accident surpasses design. Spill a puddle of coloured

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Carto- mania

water on a sheet of paper and pound it with your fist, and lo, an outline is produced which you could not excel in a day's hard work with your pencil!

The establishment of a boundary line, too, requires much thought in order that your frontier interlocks well with your neighbours'. Your rivers must be well studied, your mountains planned, and your cities located according to the requirements of the game. You must name your places, you must calculate your distances, and you must erase and correct many times before you can rival the picturesque possibilities of such a land as India, for instance, which, from the point of view of the sentimental cartographer, is one of the most interesting of states.

If such an effort is too difficult for the beginner, one might begin with a country of which something is known, yet which never has been charted. "Gulliver's Travels," for instance, contains information of many lands that should be drawn to scale. Lilliput, Brobdignag, Laputa, and the land of horses would alone make a very interesting atlas. The geography of Fairyland affords charming opportunities for the draughtsman. For myself, I prefer the magical territory of the Arthurian legends, and I have platted Sir Launcelot's Isle, with Joyous Gard at the northern end, high over the sea. There is a pleasance, a wood, a maze, and a wharf jutting out into a shallow, smiling water, while the lists occupy a promontory to the south.

Oh, the opportunities are many for the cartomaniac! Who has mapped Utopia, Atlantis, Alice's Wonderland, or the countries of the Faerie Queene? Who has reconstructed the plans of Troy? And there are other allegorical lands, too, that should be mapped. I have had a try myself at the modern "Bohemia," and have taken

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the liberty of shewing within its much-maligned borders Arcady and the Forest of Arden. I have even planned Millamours, the city of a thousand loves, and I am now attempting to draw a map of the State of Literature in the year 1902.

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mania**

There are many celebrated edifices, too, that might be trifled with. I have a friend, an architect, who has completed the Castle of Zenda, and he is now occupied with Circe's palace, with a fine eye to the decorative effect of the pig-pens. Think of laying out the gardens, grottoes, and palaces of the Arabian Nights! Why has the Castle of Otranto been neglected—and Udolpho, and Castle Dangerous, and the Moated Grange?

Many novelists, and, I think, most writers of pure romance, have played this game. Stevenson, dreaming in his father's office, drew the map of Treasure Island, and from that chart came forth, hint by hint, the suggestions for his masterpiece. Maurice Hewlett drew a plat of the ancient marches and forests where the Forest Lovers wandered, and it is a pity he did not publish it in more detail. This is one of the graphical solutions of story writing, a queer, anomalous method whereby the symbol suggests the concept. The cheaper magazines often use old cuts, and request some hack to write a story to fit the illustration. But the map is an abstraction; its revelations are cabalistic, not definite.

A good map is a stage set for romantic fiction,
ready for anybody who can write
or dream the play.

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The Science of Flattery

TIME was when people were less sophisticated and almost everybody could be flattered. A compliment was the pinch of salt that could be placed upon any bird's tail.

But such game is scarcer now, and to capture one's quarry one has to practice all the arts of modern social warfare. We have, for instance, been taught to believe, time out of mind, that women are especially susceptible to this saccharine process; that one had but to make a pretty speech, and her conquest was assured. But what lady nowadays can take a compliment without bridling? It is as much as a man's reputation is worth to make a plain, straightforward statement of approbation. He must veil his meaning so that it can be discovered only by a roundabout reflection. Whether it be true or not, he is held offensively responsible for the blush with which it is received.

So, to be successful, one must be politic and tactful; one must adopt the indirect method, and, above all, one must escape the obvious. To say what has been said many times before defeats the very purpose, whether it be good or evil, for which we flatter. The artist discards the hackneyed compliment, and endeavours to place his arrow in a spot that has never been hit before. He will compliment a poet upon his drawings and a painter upon his verses. If a woman, ordinarily plainly dressed, has a single effective garment, does he compliment her upon that particular costume? By no means. Subtly demands that he flatter her by pointing out some interesting

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feature in one of her common frocks, without hinting that it is surprising to see her particularly well clad. Such compliments have the flavour of novelty, and are treasured up by the recipient, to be quoted long after the donor has forgotten them.

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The tribute of unexpected praise is more grateful to a person than the reward for which he works hardest and is most confident. It discovers to him new and pleasing attributes. It has all the zest and relish that the particular always has more than the general. And, besides, for the person who happens to light upon some little favourite trick of individuality, and to notice and to comment upon it, the reward is great. Such a flatterer is, in the heart of the flattered one, throned with the authority of discernment; he is considered forever after as a critic of the first importance. Everyone has a hobby, an idiosyncrasy, visible or invisible; it is the art of the flatterer to discover it, and his science to use it to his own ends.

Flattery is, however, an edged tool, and must be used with care. It is not everyone who has the tact to decide at a glance just how much his victim will stand. He may know enough, perhaps, to praise the author of a successful book for some other one of his works which has not attained a popular vogue; he may have the discretion to banter men about their success with the opposite sex, and to accuse women of cleverness; but for all that he may often misjudge his object, and give embarrassment if not actual affront. For all such the safest weapon is the written word.

This is the ambush from which your prey cannot escape. If a letter of praise, of compliment, or even of deliberate flattery, is made decently interesting, if it is not too grossly cloying even for private perusal, it cannot fail to count. It has to be paid for by no blush,

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no awkward moment, no painful conspicuous self-consciousness, no hypocritical denial. It strikes an undefending victim, and brings him down without a struggle. Such tributes of praise can be read and reread without mortification. It is a sweet-smelling incense that burns perpetually before the shrine of vanity. One compliment written down in black and white is worth any number of spoken words, and the trouble that has been taken to commit such praise to paper gives the offering an added interest and importance. Anything that can be said can be written, from the eulogy of a lady's slipper to the appreciation of a solo on the harp. You may be sure that any unconventionality of manner will be atoned for by the seduction of a honeyed manner. Stevenson, in his playful "Decalogue for Gentlemen," set down as his first canon, "Thou shalt not write an anonymous letter," but it cannot be doubted that he would have excepted an unsigned note of admiration.

The element of time, in flattery, too, is often disregarded. Few would-be flatterers understand the increased influence of a compliment deferred. It is again the same case of the misuse of the obvious. When your friend's book appears, or his picture is displayed, there are enough to compliment him on the spot, but your own sympathetic endorsement, delayed a few months, or even iterated, comes to him when he is least expecting the compliment. He is off his guard, and the shot goes home. When I give Celestine a present she thanks me immediately, of course, but that is not the last of it. In every third letter or so I am reminded of her gratitude and my kindness.

There is, however, a flattery of manner as well as one of matter. Celestine, to whose wise counsels I am indebted for many a short cut

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in the making of friends, once laid down for me the following rules for dealing with women :

First, be intellectual with pretty women.

Second, be frivolous with intellectual women.

Third, be serious and *empresé* with young girls.

Fourth, be saucy and impudent with old ladies. Call them by their first names, if necessary.

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It goes without saying that such audacious methods require boldness and sureness of touch, especially in the application of the fourth rule. But even that, when attempted with spirit and assurance, has given miraculous results. In a case where a woman's age is in question, action speaks far louder than words.

Perhaps the most successful method of flattery is that of the person who makes the fewest compliments. To gain a name for brusqueness and frankness is, in a way, to attain a reputation for sincerity. Whether this is just or not, it is undoubtedly true that the occasional unlooked for praise of such a person acquires an exaggerated importance and worth. This system is similar to that of the billiard-player who goes through the first half of his game wretchedly in order to surprise his opponent with the dexterity of his shots later on. But it is an amateurish ruse, and is soon discovered and discounted at its true value. Yet in a way, too, it is justifiable, since unpleasant comments are usually accepted as candid, while pleasant ones alone are suspected.

There is a kind of conscious vanity to which flattery comes welcome, however patent the hyperboles may appear. To such persons, and there are many, a certain amount of adulation oils the mental machine. They do not believe all that is said, but prefer, on the whole, to be surrounded by pleasant fictions rather than by

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unpleasant facts. They prefer harmony to honesty, and, though the oil on the troubled waters of life does not dispel the storm, it makes easier sailing. To others, especially if they be creators in any art, compliments stimulate and impel to their best endeavour. Many a man has achieved a masterpiece chiefly because a woman declared him capable of it.

The question of the object for which flattery is employed is here beside the mark. It may be used or misused; it may be true or false of itself, although, to be sure, the word flattery has attained an evil significance and has come to stand for counterfeit approval. All that has been said, however, applies to one as well as to the other. Even when praise has the least foundation in fact, it may prove beneficial to the person flattered, arousing a pride which creates the admired quality that was wholly lacking. Thus I have known a man notorious for his vulgarity stimulated to a very creditable politeness by the most undeserved and insincere compliment upon his table manners.

I have used the three testimonials of admiration as synonymous, but Celestine says that praise is
a rightful fee, a compliment is
a tip, and that flattery
is bribery.

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Romance En Route

HOW tired I am of the question, "How do you like London?" and "How do you like New York?" "Would you rather live in San Francisco or Paris?" Why, indeed, should I not like London, Kalamazoo, Patagonia, Bombay, or any other place where live men and women walk the streets, eat, drink, and are merry? How can I say whether El Dorado is better than Arcady, or a square room more convenient than an oblong one? Every living place has its own fascination, its mysteries, its characteristic delights. Ask me, rather, if I can understand London, if I can catch the point of view of the French *concierge*, if I comprehend the slang and bustle of Chicago? Like them? Show me the town I cannot like! Know them? Ah, that is different!

This is the charm of travel — to keep up the feeling of strangeness to the end, never to take things for granted or let them grow stale, to see them always as though one had never seen them before. Then, and only then, can we see things as they really are. When I become cosmopolitan, world-old, *blasé*, when I think and speak in all languages, I shall fly to some deserted island to study the last, most impenetrable enigma — myself.

But meanwhile, I can purchase romance retail, at the mere cost of a railway ticket. I can close my eyes in one city, and wake next morning in its mental antipode. Romance requires only a new point of view; it is the art of getting fresh glimpses of the commonplace. One need not be transported to the days of chivalry, one need not

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even travel; one need only begin life anew every morning, and look out upon the world unfamiliarly as the child does. One must be born a discoverer. Thus one may keep youth, for the sport never loses colour. One game won or lost, the next has an equal interest, though we use the same counters and the same board. The combinations are always fresh.

Still, though one may find this fountain of perpetual youth in one's breakfast glass, the obvious conventional method is to go forth for the adventure, and get this famed elixir at some foreign and well-advertised spring. For this purpose tourists travel, taking part in a pilgrimage of whose meaning and proper method they are wholly ignorant. In their boxes and portmanteaus they pack, not hopes of mystery, faith in the compelling marvels of the world, nor the wonder of strange sights; but instead, fault-finding comparisons, and prejudice against all manners not their own. They do not see, in the omnibus of London, the automobile of Paris, the electric trolley of New York and the cable car of San Francisco, the pregnant evidence of several points of view on life, art and commerce, but they perceive only grotesque contrasts with their own particular means of locomotion. They do not delight in the incomprehensible hurly-burly of civilization that has produced the City Man, the Bounder, the Coster, the Hoodlum, Hooligan and Sundowner, nor do they attempt to solve the mystery or get the meat from such strange shells. Instead, they see only the clerk at the lunch-counter bolting his chops and half-pint, the incredible waistcoat of the pretentious *blagueur*, or the buttons and "moke" of the ruffling D'Artagnan of the Old Kent-road.

So the tourist travels with his eyes shut, while the true traveller

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has a lookout on life, keen for new sensations. To do things in Rome as the Romans do, that is his motto. He must eat spaghetti with his fingers, his rice and chopped suey with chop-sticks, or he fails of their subtle relish. He calls no Western town crude or uncivilized, but he tries to cultivate a taste for cocktails, that he may imbibe the native fire of occidental enthusiasm. In the East he is an Oriental; he changes his mind, his costume and his spectacles wherever he goes, and underneath the little peculiarities of custom and environment, he finds the essential realities of life.

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To taste all this fine, crisp flavour of living — not to write about it or fit it to sociological theories, but to live it, understand it, be it — this is the art of travel, the art of romance, the art of youth. But there is no Baedeker to guide such a sentimental tourist through such experiences as these. It takes a lively glance to recognize a man disguised in a frock coat, and to find him blood brother to the Esquimau!

Well, there is a place in Utah on the Central Pacific Railroad called Monotony. The settlement consists of a station, a water-tank, and a corrugated iron bunk-house. The level horizon swings round a full circle, enclosing a flat, arid waste, bisected by an unfenced line of rails, straight as a stretched string. The population consists of a telegraph operator, a foreman, and six section hands. Yet I dare say I would like to stay there awhile, on the way, and perhaps I would taste some charm that London never gave. I am not so sure that but that before I took wing again I might not like it, in some respects, better even than Paris.

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The Edge of the World

TO FIND the colonial or the provincial more cultured, better educated in life and keenlier cognizant of the world's progress than the ordinary metropolitan, is a common enough paradox. Class for class, the outlander has more energy, greater sapience and a truer zest of intellect than the citizen at the capital. By the outlander is not meant, however, the mere suburban or rural inhabitant, but the dweller at the outpost of civilization, the picket on the edge of the world.

Let us grant that, in the gross, every new community must be crude—it takes time to grow ivy over the walls, to soften the primary colours into harmonious tones, to smooth off the rough edges,—but let us also grant that, at all the back doorways of empire, in far-away corners of the earth, are assembled little coteries of men and women who, by reason of their very isolation, rather than despite it, have made themselves cosmopolitan, catholic, eclectic, and stand ever ready to welcome, each in his own polite dialect and idiom, the astonished traveller who thinks he has left all that is great and good behind.

This compensation is, indeed, a natural law. If we cut back half the shoots of a shrub, the surviving sprouts will be more vigorous. The deprivation of one sense renders the others more acute. Make it hard for an ambitious lad to obtain an education, and, working alone by candle-light, he will outstrip the student with greater advantages. So it is with the colonial who realizes

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his poverty of artistic and intellectual resources. He must, in self-defense and to compensate for his isolation, make friends with the world at large, and his mental vision, accustomed to long ranges of sight, becomes sharp and subtle. To avoid the reproach of provincialism he studies the great centers of thought and watches eagerly for the first signs of new growths in fads, fashions, art and politics. It is for this reason that the British colonial is more British than the Englishman at home.

**The Edge
of the
World**

Plunged in the midst of the turmoil of every-day excitements, the dwellers in great cities lose much of the true and fine significance of things. A thousand enterprises are beginning, and amidst a myriad essays the headway of yesterday's novelty is lost in the struggle of today's agonists. The little, temporary, local success seems big with import, and the slower development of more serious and permanent virtues is ignored. Things are seen so closely that they are out of true proportion, and they are seen through media of personality that diffract and magnify.

But the provincial, far from this complicated aspect of intellectual life, gains greatly in perspective. Separated by great space, he is, in a way, separated by time also, and he sees what another generation will perhaps see in the history of today. For he watches not only literary London, that tiniest and most garrulous of gossiping villages, but a dozen other hives of thought as well, and from his very distance can the more easily discern the first signs of pre-eminence. His ears are not ringing with a myriad petty clamours, but he can hear, rising above the multitudinous hum, the voice of those who sing clearest. The connoisseur in art views a painting from across the hall—the lover of music does not sit too

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The Edge of the World

close to the orchestra—and so the intelligent looker-on at life does not come too often in familiar touch with the aspirants for fame. Living, as one might say, upon a hill, the stranger thus gets the range, volume and trend of human activities, and sees their movements, like those of armies marching below him, though they seem as ants, so far away. He can trace the direction of waves of emotion that follow round the earth like tides of the sea.

In every community, however small or remote, there are a few who delight in this comprehensive view of things, who keep up with the times, and, so far as their immediate neighbours are concerned, are ahead of the prevailing mode. As the meteorologist, studying the reports from North, South, East and West, can trace the progress of storm and wind, so these intelligent observers can predict what will be talked about next, and how soon the first murmurs will reach their shores. Their cosmic laboratory is the club library table, with its journals and periodicals from all over the world.

The first hint of a new success in literature comes from the London weeklies, and then, if the British opinion is corroborated by American favour, the New York papers take up the note of praise, and one may follow the progress of a novel's triumph across three thousand five hundred miles of continent, or see the word pass from colony to colony, over the whole empire. The Londoner sees but the bubbles at the spring—the pioneer by the Pacific watches the course of a mighty stream increasing in depth and width. Tomorrow, or in three months, the vogue will reach his own town, and he will smile to see all tongues wag of the latest literary success.

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So it is with art, so it is with fashions, with the drama and with every fad and foible, from golf and Babism to the last song and catchword of the music halls. The colonial is behind the times? What does it matter! Are we not all behind the times of tomorrow? So long as we cannot travel faster than the news, it makes little difference; and it is wise, when we are in San Francisco, to do as the Franciscans do. It is as bad to be ahead of the times as to be behind, and it is best to follow the style of one's own locality, with a shrewd eye to one's purchases for the future, buying what we can see must come into popular favour.

**The Edge
of the
World**

But does your metropolitan enjoy this complexity, this living in the future? Not he! He cares nothing for the *vieux jeu*. For him, ping-pong is dead or dying—he neither knows nor cares that it still lives in the Occident, marching in glory ever towards the West, along the old trail to fame. Of the last six successful books discussed over his muffins, does he know which have been virile enough to survive transplanting to other shores—which have emigrated and become naturalized in the colonies? No! He is for the next little victory at the tea tables of the elect!

And yet, this afterglow, this subsequent invasion of new territory is what brings enduring fame. Before the city election is substantiated, the country must be heard from. The urban hears the solo voices of adulation, the worship of those near and dear to celebrity, but the great chorus that sweeps the hero up to Parnassus comes from a wider stage. The army of invasion never comes home again to be hailed as victor until it has encircled the globe. But it is the greater conquest that the dweller at the outpost sees, at first like a cloud no bigger than a man's hand, and it is his game to watch

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The Edge of the World

and await it. It is better so. Waste no pity upon him at the edge of the world. For the big game needs big men, and it is the boldest and most strenuous spirits who push to Ultima Thule. The anæmic and neurotic do not emigrate; the reddest blood has flowed in the veins of the pioneer ever since the first migration. He does things, rather than talks of things others have done—he knows life, even if he knows not Ibsen. Meet him in his far-away home, and he holds your interest with an unlooked-for charm; take him to the Elgin marbles and he will have and hold his own idea of art unborrowed from text-books. He knows more of your city's history than you do yourself; panic or the furor of a fashion cannot hypnotize him. The importance of a celebrated name cannot embarrass him, for he has met men unknown to fame who have lived as uncrowned kings. He has seen cities rise from the plain. He has made the wilderness to blossom like the rose; he has lived, not written epics.

And in addition to gaining all this experience that trained the pioneers of old, he has, while living at the confines of civilization, kept in touch with the world, and has tasted the exhilarating flavour of the old and new in one mouthful. For, in this century, distance is swept away and no land is really isolate.

The pioneer lives like a god above distinctions of time, at once in the past, the present and the future.

THE COMMONPLACE




The Diary Habit

FOR seven years I have kept my diary scrupulously, without missing a day, and now, at the beginning of a new twelvemonth, I am wondering whether I should maintain or renounce it. There are certain good habits, it would seem, as hard to break as bad ones, and if the practice of keeping a daily journal is a praiseworthy one, it derives no little of its virtue from sheer inertia. The half-filled book tempts one on; there is a pleasure in seeing the progress of the volume, leaf by leaf; like sentimental misers, we hoard our store of memories. We end each day with a definite statement of fact or fancy, and it grows harder and harder to abstain from the self-enforced duty. Yet it is seldom a pleasure, when one is fatigued with excitement or work, to transmit our affairs to writing. Some, it is true, love it for its own sake, or as a relief for pent-up emotions, but, in one way or another, most autobiographical journalists consider the occupation as a prudent depositor regards his frugal savings in the bank. Some time, somehow, they think, these coined memories will prove useful.

Does this time ever come, I wonder? For me it has not come yet, though I still picture a late reflective age when I shall enjoy recalling the past, and live again my old sensations. But life is more strenuous than of yore, and even at seventy or eighty, nowadays, no one need consider himself too old for a fresh, active interest in the world about him. Your old gentleman of today does not sit in his own corner of the fireplace and dote over the lost years; he reads

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The Diary Habit


the morning papers, and insists upon going to the theatre with his nieces on wet evenings. Have I, then, been laying up honey for a winter of discontent that shall never come?

Besides this distrust of my diaries, I am awakening after seven years to the fact that, as autobiography, the books are strangely lacking in interest. They are not convincing. I thought, as I did my clerkly task, that I should always be I, but a cursory glance at these naïve pages shows that they were written by a thousand different persons, no one of whom speaks the language of the emotions as I know it today. It is true, then, my diary has convinced me, that we do become different persons every seven years. Here is written down rage, hate, delight, affection and yearning, no word of which is comprehensible to me now; they leave me quite cold. I am reading the adventures of some one else, not my own. Who was it? I have forgotten the dialect of my youth. Ah, indeed, the boy is father of the man! I will be indulgent, as a son should, to paternal indiscretions!

And yet, for the bare skeleton of my history, these volumes are useful enough. The pages which, while still wet with ink and tears I considered lyric essays, have fallen to a merely utilitarian value. I am thankful, on that account, for them, and for the fact that my bookkeeping was well systematized and indexed. As outward form goes, my diaries are models of manner. So for those still under the old-fashioned spell, who would adopt a plan of entry, let me describe them.

The especial event of each day, if the day held anything worthy of remark or remembrance, was boldly noted at the top of the page over the date. Whirring the leaves I catch many suggestive phrases:

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“*Dinner at Mme. Qui Vive’s*” (it was there I first tasted champagne), “*Henry Irving in ‘Macbeth’*” (but it was not the actor that made that night famous—I took Kitty Carmine home in a hansom!), “Broke my arm” (or else I would never have read Marlowe, I fear), and “Met Sally Reynard” (this was an event, it seemed at that time, worthy of being chronicled in red ink). So they go. They are the chapter headings in the book of my life.

The Diary Habit

In the lower left-hand corner of each page I noted the receipt of letters, the initials of the writers inscribed in little squares, and in the opposite right-hand corner a complementary hieroglyph kept account of every reply sent. So, by running over the pages I can note the fury of my correspondence. (What an industrious scribbler “S. R.” was to be sure! I had not thought we went it quite so hard—and “K. C.”—how often she appears in the lower left, and how seldom in the lower right! I was a brute, no doubt, and small wonder she married Flemingway!)

Perpendicularly, along the inner margin, I wrote the names of those to whom I had been introduced that day, and on a back page I kept a chronological list of the same. (I met Kitty, it seems, on a Friday—perhaps that accounts for our not hitting it off!) Most of these are names, and nothing more, now, and it gives my heart a leap to come across Sally in that list of nonentities. (To think that there was ever a time when I did not know her!)

Besides all this, the books are extra-illustrated in the most significant manner. There is hardly a page that does not contain some trifling memento; here, a theatre coupon pasted in, or a clipping from the programme, an engraved card or a pencilled note; there a scrap of a photograph worn out in my pocket-book, somebody’s

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sketched profile, or, at rare intervals, a wisp of some one's hair! (This reddish curl—was it Kitty's or from Dora's brow? Oh, I remember, it was Myrtle gave it me! No, I am wrong; I stole it from Nettie!) I pasted them in with eager trembling fingers, but I regard them now without a tremour. There are other pages being filled which interest me more.

Occasionally I open a book, 1895 perhaps, and consult a date to be sure that Millicent's birthday is on November 12th, or to determine just who was at Kitty's coming-out dinner. Here is a diagram of the table with the places of all the guests named. (So I sat beside Nora, did I? And who was Nora? I have forgotten her name! *Now* she is Mrs. Alfred Fortunatus!)

Sometimes I think it would be better to write up my diary in advance, to fill in the year's pages with what I would like to do, and attempt to live up to the prophecy. And yet I have had too many unforeseen pleasures in my life for that. I would rather trust fate than imagination. So, chiefly because I have kept the book for seven years, I shall probably keep it seven years more. It gratifies my conceit to chronicle my small happenings, and somehow, written down in fair script, they seem important. And besides I am a bit anxious to see just how many times a certain name, which has lately begun to make itself prominent, will appear at the top of the pages. I promise to tell you some time, if Celestine is willing!

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The Perfect Go-between

SURELY the modern invention that has done most to perpetuate Romance is the telephone. The man that, however used to this machine, can take up its ear-piece without a thrill of wonder has no soul. The locomotive, the steamship, the automobile have but made travel a bit more rapid, they have added no new element of mystery. Even the telegraph fails to give any true feeling of surprise. It is no whit more wonderful than that one, after writing a letter and slipping it into a red mail-box, should be handed a reply by a strange, blue-clad gentleman, after many days. A telegraphic despatch does not even hold the handwriting of the sender; it is cold, colourless, metallic.

But a machine that can bring your friend into the same room with you, at a moment's notice, who can deny the poetry of such a victory over space and time! Not until some genius invents a thought-transmitter shall a more stupendous aid to Romance be discovered. For see! It is not only one's friends that are caught in the net of telephone wires, one can drag up a whole city full! I have but to sit down at my desk and call up a number, and he or she must reply. True, I cannot force any one to answer, but if I have the audacity and persistency, it will go hard if I do not find some one who is willing to while away a leisure, inquisitive moment in inconsequent conversation.

It is my privilege to live in a telephone city where the habit is extraordinarily developed. One out of every sixteen of the popula-

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The Perfect Go-between

tion is connected to that most amiable of go-betweens, the Central Office. I have the opportunity of investigating some thirty thousand souls at the ridiculously cheap price of five cents per soul! Not only every counting-house and shop, doctor's office and corner grocery has its wire, but every residence with any claims to acquaintance. What Romance gone to waste! For few, it seems, have imagination enough to embrace such unlimited opportunities!

This morning Sonia called me at 8:25, apologizing for her kind-heartedness in letting me sleep when she knew I wished to work. Think of that for an alarm clock—Sonia's voice, ten miles away! So I am awakened by the telephone, I call by telephone, flirt by telephone, shop, market and speculate over the same wire. We do not take long in utilizing the latest invention here in this hurried land—the city is ravaged by Telephonitis. One invites friends to dinner, one makes appointments, one breaks the news of the death of a friend, one proposes marriage—all by means of this little instrument. I know one lady who has her machine connected by flexible wires so that she may talk in bed. She need not be too strict in regard to dress for her interviews—no one ever knows! I know two old men who while away long evenings together playing chess, when the weather is too harsh to leave home. Beside each board stands the faithful receiver; one has but to whisper “K.B. to Q.3” or some such rigamarole into the nickel-plated “extension” and he has checkmated his opponent across the Bay!

With such common intercourse as this, many are the comedies of the telephone. I have myself entertained a visitor with a diversion he will not soon forget. The day he came I took him to my telephone and introduced him in turn to a half-dozen ladies of my

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acquaintance, who plied him with badinage. We set forth then on a tour of calls, and I enjoyed his several attempts at identifying the voices he had heard over the wire. It is not always easy to recognize a voice and remember it. I remember an unfortunate experience of my own with two sisters which brought a week's embarrassment, for the voices of members of one family do have a marvellous similarity in the telephone, and if one is anxious to call upon Fanny when Elizabeth is out, one must be very sure just which sister one is speaking to when making an appointment.

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The necessity for such precaution has led some of my friends to adopt telephone methods which must be extremely amusing to one who could hear both sides of the conversation. In many houses the telephone is situated in the hall, altogether too near the dining-room for any confidential communication. If the questioner is careful he may so word his inquiries that they may be answered by a mere "yes" or "no"; and papa, smoking after dinner, is none the wiser. If the girl finds it impossible to reply in unguarded terms, she has been known to say, somewhat vaguely, "*Of course*," which conveys to the man at the other end of the wire the fact that she is not alone. Some, too, have more definite codes. Celestine has arranged with me that when she mentions the "*Call*" it means the forenoon; the "*Chronicle*" stands for afternoon, while by the "*Examiner*" I understand that she refers to the evening. If, then, I ring her up and say, "When can you go walking today? I want to be sure not to meet that fool Clubberly." Clubberly, who is at her elbow, hears her reply sweetly, "Really! Yes, I saw it in the "*Chronicle*"; and how is he to know what it is all about? Oh, he could have his revenge easily enough, were he not an ass, for he might be kissing

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Celestine (horrid thought) even as she is speaking, for all I could know.

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With this romantic battery opposed to her, what chance has poor Mrs. Grundy? What hard-hearted parent can successfully immure his daughter while the copper wire strings out toward her proscribed lover? Here is where love laughs at locksmiths. Were a dozen ineligibles forbidden the house, the moment mamma's back is turned and she has gone out for her round of calls, little daughter takes the telephone off the hook and, presto! she has her room full of clandestine company! Does any rash young man dare ring her up while her parents are near, she has but to say, sweetly, "Oh, you have the wrong number!" and hang up. It is too wonderful. You may lie by telephone, with a straight face, or you may call a man a liar with impunity. If you have no answer ready to an ardent impertinence, you need only say nothing and listen—he is helpless; you need not speak unless you want to. Who made the first telephone made mischief for a thousand years to come!

Rrrrrrrrrrrng!!!! There is Celestine ringing me up now! Pardon me if I leave you for a moment, for I think she is going to give me her answer to a very important question. Tremendously important for me! Wish me good luck! I hope no one will be listening!

THE COMMONPLACE

Growing Up

WHEN I asked Perilla how she first came to realize that she was growing up, she said, "When I began of my own accord to wash my sticky fingers, without waiting to be told." I believe she meant it literally, with no moral significance that should make a parable of the statement. I hope so, at least, for then by that test I cannot hope to have yet attained the years of discretion. Little Sister says that she felt "growing pains," but here is a figure of speech, surely. I suppose she means the wonder of the passage from a great, wistful ignorance to a limited knowledge; for the first part of the path of life is a very steep up-grade.

I myself can point to no one circumstance that revealed to me the vision of the great march of time that is sweeping us on towards the goal. I was for long like one who looks from the window of a railway carriage, too busily engaged in watching the world fly past him to realize his own motion. Neither long trousers nor razors awoke me from the child-trance; I saw scorned infants master me by their inches; I heard rumours of love and death and duty, but I was unmoved. It was a part of the game of existence, and it seemed natural that persons should be classified and remain in categories of old and young. I was a spectator outside the merry-go-round. I was to be rich, of course; I had the mind to dare and the will to do. I should be wise, too — why not? Sometimes I should have memories, I thought, not knowing that I was even then living away my

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life, and that this was an era to which I should look back and deem important.

**Growing
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All my reading, too, went to show that I was an amateur at living. Things seemed really to happen in books, but not to me; there men were swung in unknown furies, sensations were keen and impelling, and life had the sharp sting of reality. My own emotions seemed insipid and inadequate for a citizen of the world. Surely such minor escapades and trivialities as mine were not worth considering. And so, when the storm and stress came, I was ill-prepared, and at the first blow my pride went down. Some devil, as in a dream, whispered in my ear that perhaps I might not succeed after all, and it came to me as a summons that the time had come to be out and doing. And I saw that the conquest of my ambition would be achieved, not by the impetuous onslaught that should carry all before it, but by the slow and tedious siege, laid with years of waiting and working and watching. It was then, perhaps, though I did not know it, that I began to grow up, and became a man. I opened my eyes and looked about me; it was as if I had been landed fresh from the country in the busy town, like the Sleeper Awakened. No more field-faring and trapesing holidays under the blue sky; I must choose my street and fight my way for it against the throng.

It struck me with a sense of my inferiority that there was an absolute quality of knowledge I had not mastered. Some of my classmates seemed to know things, while I had but acquired information. They could swim; I dared not go in over my head. They had convictions, I had only opinions; it was the difference between the language of Frenchmen and they who learn French. Here, I thought, was the final classification, and I wrote myself down a witless

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neophyte in the world's mysteries. For my whole education had been founded upon the value of the verity of the straight line, and wisdom was my highest ideal. By this standard I measured myself and my experience. I delighted in the beauty of science, but of that other beauty which is its own excuse for being, I did not know. I was as one who saw form without colour, or the outline without the mass. I had not yet come to myself; I was a child yet, and the result of my immediate environment—a mental chameleon. A few generations of my austere ancestors impregnated my blood with their stern virtues, and it still ran cold and tranquil in my veins. But there were more remote and subtle influences behind me that must work themselves out, and in some sub-stratum of consciousness the pure Greek in me survived.

Growing
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And so it was Dianeme who brought me at last to the door of the temple, and I saw with her eyes and heard with her ears, and the world grew beautiful, an altogether fitting setting for her charms. And then I knew in very truth that I had grown up; but yet, by a sublime miracle I had in the same revelation recovered my youth—if, indeed, I had ever really been young before! Now, succeed or fail as I might, life would always be fair and interesting, for Dianeme was but one of a divine sisterhood, and there were many degrees to be taken. So a kind of passion seized me to know Life's different phases and find the secret of the whole; and that mood, God willing, shall preserve my virginity to the end.

So here I am, by the grace of Dianeme, on the true road to youth again, not to that absolute unconcern of all but the present, that I once felt, nor to the fool's paradise, where, Maida would have it, is the true happiness—"the ability to fool one's self"—but to a

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Growing Up

kind of childlike wonder at things (ah, Little Sister, may you never wander from it as I did!) and the knowledge of what is really the most worth while. (And you, Perilla, you need not pretend that you don't know, for the truth flashes from your jest!)

For this is the very blossom of my youth, the era of knowing, as that was the era of being, and though there may come other dark days, as there were before the bud burst into bloom, I have seen the beginning and I know the law now, and I trust that the fruit of my life, the doing, may be even more worth the while. And I shall perhaps find that wisdom and beauty and goodness are but one thing, as the poets say — that living is a continual growing up, and that age is only a youth that knows why it is happy!

THE COMMONPLACE

A Pauper's Monologue

UNDERSTAND, I am not one of those who are always longing to be rich. I do very well, ordinarily, in the shadow of prosperity, though there comes upon me periodically the lust for gold, at which times the desire to rush down-town and spend money indiscreetly must be obeyed. It is a common symptom, paupers tell me, and carries with it its own remedy, giving much the same relief that blood-letting did of old, if so be the practice does not lead to a dangerous hemorrhage. I have my ups and downs, like most unsalaried Bohemians, thin purse, thick purse, at erratic intervals, but my spendthrift appetite is curiously independent of these financial fluctuations. In fact, a miserly restraint is most likely to seize me when my pocket is full, and I usually grow reckless when it has no silver lining.

There are few paupers among us who do not conceit themselves to be artists at spending money, and believe the fit intelligence is most wanting in those who have the means. I confess that I share their convictions, having wasted much time in a study of the situation. Like those planning a foreign tour, I have mapped out the golden road of Opportunity, and know the itinerary by heart. And, without trespassing the science of Economy, of which I am criminally ignorant (having been somewhat prepossessed during my Sophomore courses), I submit there are active and passive categories into which coupon-cutters may be relegated. The symbol of your monied man is the cigar, involving a destructive process, whether applied to food,

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A Pauper's Monologue

raiment or ministry to the senses. The greed of the collector is of the same flavour. It is the difference between spending the money to see and to stage the play that I mean.

For why should an access of wealth so dull the brain that the battle between the kings of hearts and spades seems more interesting than the game with human knights and pawns? I have often been minded to write an "Open Letter to Millionaires," and offer myself as a Master of their Sports, to guide them through fields of untried sensation and novel enterprises. I have my offers tabulated from an hundred dollars upward, each involving the inception of activities whose ramifications would provide diversion for years. There are twenty young men I know of in this town who are waiting for such a chance. Why should I not be elected to captain them? I promise you the rise and fall of stocks shall not be more exciting than our rivalries. Indeed, brains are for sale at absurd bargains today. Why not play them off against each other in a game of Life?

But these are dreams never to be realized. I am no promoter, and must play the beggar's part. Yet I have often wondered how I would be affected if these hopes came true, and if some capitalist, touched by my appeal, seeing this good seed cast upon barren ground, opening his heart and purse-strings, should present me with a modest fortune without conditions. Could I assume the responsibility of gratitude and fly with the load of obligation that I myself would assume? By all rules of fiction, no! Yet if my conscience were seduced I might frame my mind to accept debonairly and do my best. Tempt me not, millionaires, for this is my week of longing, and my brain boils with adventurous desires.

Yet, had I the ear of the benefactor, another mood would impel

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my renunciation; for, against my will and interest, I am forced to acknowledge that others are better fitted to be rich than I, who have been a pauper all my life, and am not so unhappy in my misery. I know some to whom wealth should come as a right, as has their beauty, and who play an inconsistent part upon the stage of poverty. There is Dianeme, who knows the names of all the roses, and can tell one etching from another. She is so instinct with tact and taste that I feel quite unworthy of affluence until she has been served. And there, too, is Little Sister, who is in worse case, having once ridden on high wheels and nestled against the padded comforts of life, now charioted by street cars, with a motorman for a driver and a conductor for a footman. And though it was her reverses that gave me chance to be her friend and discover her worth, yet I fear I would put back my opportunity ten years to give her the little luxuries she craves. She has acquired a relish for the flesh-pots, poor Little Sister, and somehow the weakness becomes her, as the habit of weeping fitted the eighteenth century ideals of women. Two more pairs of silk stockings would reinstate her as a lady complete. Not that anybody but Little Sister and her laundress would ever see them, but they would give her a nourishing satisfaction that is of itself worth while.

A Pauper's Monologue

Yet, again I wonder—if Little Sister grew rich, what would become of me? I am told that the first pangs of the birth of Fortune are felt in the unpleasant acquisition of new claimants to friendship, but I do not believe this is so. I should myself fear to intrude, I am sure. There would be so many new relations and obligations that I could not take the friendship simply and naturally. I could make love to her by letter, perhaps, but not in her carriage. I would

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miss the ungloved hand of familiarity and enclose myself in starched formality, though I know the pain in so doing would be mutual. For the pride of riches is as nothing to the pride of poverty, and I am very, very poor! But surely Little Sister must be rich again, even if I have to wait for the second table.

A Pauper's Monologue

And so I gracefully resign my claims to fortune, where I am so outclassed, and make off into the open fields towards the Hills of Fame, where the brougham of Opulence may not follow me, though I fare afoot. For we do not get rich in my family; there is no uncle in Patagonia whose death could benefit us, and the bag of diamonds, the hope of whose discovery sustained my immature youth, no longer haunts my dreams. For a long time yet I must deny myself the title of gentleman, forced as I am to carry parcels "over three inches square," which I hear is the test of fashionable caste. This is my last gasp. I shall be a man again tomorrow, and if any millionaire is tempted by this appeal, he must make haste. But I shall not be rung up from sleep tonight. It is the law of society that Spend helps Save, and Save helps Scrimp, and Scrimp helps Starve.

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A Young Man's Fancy

UNDoubtedly the most logical, though perhaps the least interesting, method of opening the discussion of a thesis, is that employed by the skillful carver who dissects his duck according to the natural divisions of the subject and proceeds therewith analytically. This is the system encouraged in academic courses and is said to enable any one to write upon any subject. But such an essay is mighty hard reading; unless a writer is so hungry for his theme that he forgets his manners and falls to without ceremony the chances are that his efforts will receive scant attention. And so I shyly speak of love.

So few essayists write with a good appetite! And yet, see how I restrain myself, and perforce adopt the conventional procedure, as one too proud to betray his ravening hunger! I must be calm, I must be polite—and you shall know only by my forgetfulness of the salt and my attention to the bones of thought, how the game interests me. In speaking of love, I must let my head guard my heart, too, for it is in the endeavour to misunderstand women that we pass our most delightful moments. They will not permit men to be too sure of them, and what you learn from one, you must hide carefully from the next. So I begin my fencing with a great feint of awkwardness, like a master with a beginner, knowing well enough how likely to get into trouble is any one who pretends innocence.

For a long time I believed it all a conspiracy of the novelists, and that love, so ideally depicted, was but a myth, kept alive by the

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craft, to furnish a backbone for literary sensation. But there are undoubtedly many bigoted believers in the theory of love. The women, however, who admit that it is a lost art, complain piteously of the ineptitude of the other sex. I confess that few men can satisfactorily acquit themselves of the ordeal of courtship without some tuition, but, once having acquired the rudiments of the profession, it seems inconsistent to taunt them with the experiments of their apprenticeship. It is too much to require a man to make a gallant wooing and then twit him with the "promiscuousness" by which he won his facility. Yet, some, doubtless, have learned also to defend themselves against this last accusation; it is the test of the Passed Master. For the other, poor dolts, who never see the opportunity for action, however adroitly presented, who speak when they should hold tongue and leave undone all those things that they ought to have done—the girls marry them, to be sure, but most of the love-making is on the wrong side. There are more yawns than kisses; the brutal question satisfies the yop, and he bungles through the engagement, breaking doggedly through the crust of the acquaintance, witless of the delightful perils of thin ice.

And yet I think the subject might be mastered in four lessons with a good teacher, so that a man of ordinary capacity could make good way for himself. This is by no means a new theory; it is the foundation of many a comedy of errors, this of *Love with a Tutor*. But go not to school of a maid, for she will fool you to the top of your bent, nor to a married woman either, but to a man like my younger brother here, no *Lothario*, but one who can keep two steps ahead of any affair he enters.

If a man be agile and daring, with sufficient ardour to assume

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the offensive, having an audacious tongue and a wary eye with a fine sense of congruity and tact, withal, if he can make love with a laugh and a rhyme, as Cyrano fought, then 'tis a different matter, and he needs no pilot to take his sweetheart over the bar and into the port. He must be bold, but not too bold, carry a big spread of canvas, luff, reef and tack her with no shuffling, cast the lead on the run, keeping in soundings, and never lose headway when she comes about into a new mood. He must bear a sensitive hand at the tiller, keep her close up to the wind with no tremble in the leach of the sail, and gain advantage from every tide and cross-current. Better dash against the reef than run high and dry upon the shoal!

**A Young
Man's
Fancy**

It is a pity, is it not, to dissect love in such a fashion? I should have my hero quite at the mercy of the gale of passion, and be swept forward, he knows not how and cares not where; he should lose his wits and take a mad delight in the fury of the storm, seeing no spot upon his horizon. And yet I dare not be warmer, for sometime I may decide to fall in love myself, and I would not have my chances wrecked by any genuine confession of faith, set in type, to which She might refer, with a beautiful taunt. No! it is better to phrase and verbalize; the subject is too dear, and near done to its death already. I would but suggest the cross-references, and, under a mien of the most atrocious conceit, throw my female readers off their guard, leaving my fellow men to read between the lines.

For I hear that men do fall in love with women, and women fall in love with loving. So be it. I have known girls, too, to take both vanilla and strawberry in their soda-water, which proves them to be not altogether simple in their tastes. The best of them will talk volubly upon love in the abstract, while the average man (to which

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A Young Man's Fancy category I hope I have the honour of not belonging) keeps his mouth closed on the matter, with his tongue in his cheek, and his ideas, if he have any, well hidden behind his words.

So, if I avail myself of the feminine franchise, it must be done cautiously, for many are the difficulties of the young man who would love a girl today, and only a precious few of the old school of beaux would understand the twentieth century's subtleties, even if all could be explained. Many are the misfortunes in the Lover's Litany, from which the modern maiden sighs, "Good Lord, deliver us!" A man must take her in earnest, but he must by no means take himself too seriously; it is proper to treat your passion cavalierly—indeed, he jests at scars who has felt the most amorous darts, nowadays—but he must never make himself or her ridiculous. He may take whimsical amusement in his own conquest, but must beware "the little broken laugh that spoils a kiss." And above all, mind you the *mise-en-scène*,—the stage must be set so and so; the sun must not see what the moon sees. Sometimes you must have your heart in your mouth, and sometimes on your sleeve, and oftener she must have it herself. 'Tis very perplexing!

The best a man can do, in this practical age, is to mean business, while he is about it, and hold over as much for the next day as will not interfere with his commerce elsewhere. The woman may take her romance to bed, or keep it warm in the oven against his return, but he must be out and down-town to earn his living as well as his loving, amongst dollars and pounds and cent per cent, while she enjoys the traffic in pure abstractions. And both must hide and manage as if it were a sin, lest Mrs. Grundy undo them; they must snatch their kisses, as it were, on horseback. Such are the victims of supercivilization!

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There was a time, the poets tell, when it was not so difficult, and a man might wear a lady's scarf on his sleeve, and be proud of the badge. It takes much more complicated machinery than that simple love to make the world go round, nowadays—perhaps because it goes so much faster. There was a time when an elopement might be picturesque and not necessarily followed by divorce; but where now shall I find the hard-hearted parent who shall justify the adventure? The modern mother is too easy. She is like Mrs. Brown in the *Bab Ballads*—"a foolish, weak but amiable old thing." She reposes a trust in her daughter that does more credit to her affection than to her knowledge of human nature.

A Young
Man's
Fancy

But whoa! I believe I have forgotten my manners! I have insulted my fellows, guyed the girls, and here I am on the high road to disqualifying myself with the more respectable generation. So I shall cease, but I will not apologize, for though I came to scoff, I shall not remain to prey. I believe I am not more than half wrong after all. There is love, and there is loving, and if you have followed me, you know which is which. It was Rosalind who said, "Some Cupid kills with arrows, some with traps!" How she would smile and sneer at this verbiage! She knew a lover from a philanderer, she had her opinion of the laggard and the butterfly rover, and she would no doubt say: "Cupid hath clapped him on the shoulder, but I'll warrant him heart-whole!"

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Where is Bohemia?

THE name "Bohemian" was first used to describe the gypsies of that nationality who appeared in France in the thirteenth century, but to us the term has come to carry with it a wider significance than any dependent upon that little kingdom in the north of Austria, and only a few characteristic traits of those wandering vagabonds survive in those who bear, whether in reproach or praise, the appellation "Bohemian."

To take the world as one finds it, the bad with the good, making the best of the present moment — to laugh at Fortune alike whether she be generous or unkind — to spend freely when one has money, and to hope gaily when one has none — to fleet the time carelessly, living for love and art — this is the temper and spirit of the modern Bohemian in his outward and visible aspect. It is a light and graceful philosophy, but it is the Gospel of the Moment, this exoteric phase of the Bohemian religion; and if, in some noble natures, it rises to a bold simplicity and naturalness, it may also lend its butterfly precepts to some very pretty vices and lovable faults, for in Bohemia one may find almost every sin save that of Hypocrisy.

Yet, if we were able without casuistry to divide misdeeds into two categories, those subjective and objective in their direct effects — separating those sins which hurt only the sinner from those which act upon his fellows — the Bohemian would, perhaps, be found to have fewer than most of this harsher, crueller sort. His faults are more commonly those of self-indulgence, thoughtlessness, vanity and

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procrastination, and these usually go hand-in-hand with generosity, love and charity; for it is not enough to be one's self in Bohemia, one must allow others to be themselves, as well.

*Where is
Bohemia?*

So much for the common definition of this much-used name. But no English word can stand for long in its primary meaning. It must change insensibly, growing from day to day, till it embraces the spirit as well as the letter of the fact it expresses. The word "gentleman" has thus grown with a secondary, spiritual significance; so has the word "prayer" by the interpretation of a more liberal, far-reaching thought. So with the name "Bohemian"—it has ranged beyond the vagrom, inconstant, happy-go-lucky, devil-may-care, hand-to-mouth follower after pleasure, and now under its banner may be found more serious enthusiasts who are not afraid to offend smug respectability, and are in more or less open revolt against convention, bigotry and prejudice. It is their bond that they have forsworn allegiance to Mrs. Grundy. They dare be themselves without pretensions, they make and keep their friends without compromise.

What, then, is it that makes this mythical empire of Bohemia unique, and what is the charm of its mental fairyland? It is this: there are no roads in all Bohemia! One must choose and find one's own path, be one's own self, live one's own life. Whether one makes for the larger freedom of the hills, or loses one's self in the sacred stillness of the forest, the way is open to endeavour wherever one wills. Yet, though there is no beaten track, there are still signs in the wilderness showing where master minds have passed. Here is a broken jug beneath the bough, snowed under with drifting rose petals, where one frail-souled dreamer loitered on the way, and, with his

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*Where is
Bohemia?*

Beloved, filled the cup that clears Today of past regrets
and future fears, singing out his heart in lovely plaint.
And here, along a higher trail, a few blazings in the
forest mark where another great Bohemian in this life
exempt from public haunt found tongues in trees,
books in the running brooks, sermons in stones and good in every-
thing.

Within Bohemia are many lesser states, and these I have roughly
charted on my travels, so that, though I may have left some pre-
cincts unexplored, I know at least that these territories lying on my
map are veritable provinces of this land of freedom and sincerity.
On the shore of the magic Sea of Dreams, beyond whose horizon
dances the Adventurous Main, lies the Pays de la Jeunesse, the
country of Youth and Romance, a joyous plaisance free from care
or caution, whose green, wide fields lie bathed in glamorous sun-
shine. To the eastward lie the pleasant groves of Arcady, the
dreamland, home of love and poetry. Here in this Greek paradise
of rustic simplicity and joyous innocence and hope, has lived every
poet who has ever sung the lyric note, and here have visited, for
some brief space, all who have dreamed, all who have longed, all who
have loved. Here is the old joy of life made manifest and abundant;
here Mother Nature speaks most clearly to her children. For the
most, however, it is but a holiday country, and they who discover it
often pass, never to return, forgetting its glories and its mysteries as
they forget that lost country of their youth, counting it all illusion.
Yet some few come back to the Port of Peace to lose the world again,
renewing the immemorial enchantment.

To the south, over the long procession of the hills, lies Vaga-
bondia, home of the gypsy and wanderer, who claims a wilder freedom

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beneath the stars — outlawed or voluntary exile from all restraint. This country is rocky and precipitate, full of dangers, a land of feverish unrest.

**Where is
Bohemia?**

One other district lies hidden and remote, locked in the central fastnesses of Bohemia. Here is the Forest of Arden, whose greenwood holds a noble fellowship, bound in truth and human simplicity. It is a little golden world apart, and though it is the most secret, it is the most accessible of refuges, so that there are never too many there, and never too few. Here is spoken a universal language, Nature's own speech, the native dialect of the heart. Men come and go from this bright country, but once having been free of the wood, you are of the Brotherhood and recognize your fellows by instinct, and know them, as they know you, for what you are.

Now, as Bohemia, unfortunately, is not an island, it has its neighbours and its frontiers. To the west lies Philistia, arid, dry and flat, the abode of shams, dogmas and sluggish creeds. Here stands Vanitas, overlooking a great desert, walled in by custom, guarded by false pride. It is but a step over the border, however, from Bohemia the true to that false Debatable Ground whose affectations are more insincere even than the shams of the real Philistia, and the youngster, questing the hero-haunted country of his youth, chasing his phantoms, may go wide of his reckoning, misled by the mockery of life made by these disguised Philistines. In the City of Shams, hypocrites are content to assume the virtues they have not, but here on the borders of Bohemia their vices are all pretense as well!

On the further boundary of Bohemia, also, hangs an unsavoury neighbour. Here is a madder and more terrible domain, the land of lust and cruelty, lawless and loveless, dwelling in endless war. To

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**Where is
Bohemia?**

this fierce country Vagabondia lies perilously near, and many a wanderer has crossed the frontier to find himself, before he knew, within that evil land, where freedom has become licence, and tolerance grown into Anarchy.

Wide across all three empires stretch the Hills of Fame. In Philistia men must be born great; there is no other distinction possible save that of riches or inherited power. In Bohemia men achieve greatness, working onward and upward, bringing their own great dreams to fulfillment; while in Licentia, those only become great who have an infamous notoriety thrust upon them by their own high crimes.

We cannot all mount those heights from whose crest one may look over the Sea of Care, past the Isle of Idleness to the Adventurous Main, but there is joy enough on the lowland. Happy indeed is he who, in his journey of life, has escaped the perils of that false Bohemia, crouching on the frontier, and has found his way to
the happy forest, met his own people and drunk of
the Fountain of Immortal Youth; for there
is the warm, beating, human heart
of the True Bohemia!

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The Bachelor's Advantage

THERE are enough who think "a young man married is a young man marred" to cause the bachelor to hesitate before renouncing his liberties, and to fight shy of entanglement as long as possible. If he writes down the "pros" and "cons," like Robinson Crusoe, he will find he has many advantages in his single state that must inevitably be forfeited when he weds.

It is not only that "when I was single my pockets would jingle, I would I were single again"; it is not so much, either, that his play-day will be over and he must "settle down," stop butterfly-loving to and fro, and gathering the roses as he goes, and have no haunting white face sitting up for him at home to ask him why, and how, and where. This licence, if he be a man of sentiment, he willingly foregoes for the larger possibilities of satisfactory comradeship and sympathy. He can pay double rent and taxes, too, without grumbling; take manfully the shock of surprise when expenses jump with the new establishment; he may be initiated in doctors' fees, and submit debonairly to a thousand restrictions of time, place and opportunity. But more piquant than any of these trials is the discovery that he has lost his old-time place and privilege of welcome as a bachelor—that "come any time" hospitality of his dearest friends. He is saddled with a secondary consideration.

Try as he may, no young man can marry to please his whole acquaintance. The world, for the most part, still looks with patron-

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The Bachelor's Advantage

izing approval upon a girl's wedding so long as she chooses or is chosen by a man not hopelessly impossible. She has embraced an opportunity and usually her mother cultivates a grateful fondness for the son-in-law. If he has a scarcity of amiable traits she will even manufacture them for him, and put them on the market with display. Not so the mother of the groom. She analyses the bride with incisive dissection, and it is hardly possible that any woman shall be found quite worthy to mate with her son. It takes a woman to read women, she says, and the little wife has to make a fight for each step of the road from condescension through complaisance to compliment.

The young man's friends, too, are exigent, and he soon finds that, though the two have been made one in the sight of law and clergy, society knows no such miraculous algebra. You may squeeze in an extra chair at the dinner table for a desirable and "interesting young man," but to include another lady, and that his wife, requires a tiresome rearrangement. He does not come alone ordinarily, nor would he if asked, and so he drops out of his little world and must set about the creation of a new one. He may have had latch-key privileges at a dozen houses, free to come night or morning, the recipient of many sudden invitations for theatre, supper or country—but that is all over. It is his turn to do the inviting. The table has been well turned when he sits down to meat!

Is it to be wondered at, then, that the bachelor is selfish? He escapes lightly the lesson of compromise; his whole life is a training in egoism, and he makes the most of his desirability, getting usually far more than he gives. He is free to experiment in acquaintance though it goes no farther than innocuous flirtation. He may make

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friendships for himself and break them at will, lightly dodging the tie. There are hundreds in every city who need go only where they wish, skipping even "duty calls," sure of forgiveness. He may know men and women he cares for, and, through the lack of experience in a life-long intimacy, he may preserve many illusions as to women. If he has an income, or a profession that demands no abode, he can wander "to and fro in the earth and walk up and down in it" free as Satan. He travels the farthest who travels alone.

The Bachelor's Advantage

Still, this cannot go on forever, and his franchise wanes. With the first pang of middle age Nature asserts her imperious demand for permanent companionship. The "cons" grow heavier, and the "pros" more attractive. He sees maid after maid of his younger fancy pass out of the game without regret, but the first sight of the new generation strikes him to the heart. He is "uncled" by more and more adopted nephews and nieces, and the sight of their fresh eyes awakens the immemorial longing in him. And then, suddenly, another "pro" comes upon the list, an undeniable item of importance, throwing its influence so heavily upon the side of marriage that no number of his foolish little "cons" can ever balance the account. He is in love, and there is but one definition for that state. It is the immediate, ravenous, compelling desire for a wife. There is nothing for it but to renounce allegiance to his old friends and become naturalized into a new citizenship.

But though all over town the doors to which he cried
"open sesame" bang sullenly to shut him
out, he does not notice it if
that one portal lets
him in!

THE ROMANCE OF



The Confessions of an Ignoramus

MUSICIANS tell me that I am exceptionally fortunate. I know absolutely nothing of music. It is not a bald, fathomless innocence, however. I am not tone-deaf, for instance, and certain compositions please me; and, knowing nothing, I have been treated with indulgent complaisance by the profession, and amongst them I have the unique licence of being privileged to like whatever I choose. It is no small distinction this, nowadays, when one is nicely and strictly rated by his compliance to the regnant mode, but I have to fight tooth and nail to defend my innocence. I have determined that whatever happens, I will not be educated.

For a while, once on a time, I hazarded my franchise of free speech and weakly accepted the tutelage of a master, that I might at least gain a familiarity with the catch-words of the musical fraternity. It was the more reprehensible and foolish because I had already lost my virginity in art circles by the same servility. Long ago I learned to phrase and gesticulate at the picture galleries, and try as I may, I cannot forget the formulæ. I learned to stand with eyes half closed before a painting, and waving my hand, murmur, "I like *this* part, in here!" I caught that knowing waggle of the right thumb, and prated of "modelling, tricky work, atmosphere, composition, values," and such humbuggery. I could say, straight-faced, and with a vicious, explosive gesture, "Oh, it's good in colour, but it just lacks *that*, you know!" By Jove! I was in it up to the ears before I

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knew it, and now my critiques are retailed to the semi-elect as coming from one of the Cognoscenti. I have learned the terminology of the craft so well that my very instructors have forgotten my novitiate; but an art exhibition is a horror to me, for I go bound by the tenure of hypocrisy and dare not walk freely, forced to rattle my chains as I limp through the forbidden pastures of delight—the candy box pictures and chromos that my soul loves with that fierce first love that never dies.

The Confessions of an Ignoramus

So I have learned to avoid the Pierian spring now, having escaped the seductions of Euterpe by the merest chance. He is said to be a fool who is caught twice by the same trick, and I write myself down a worse-witted clown yet when I confess how far on the high-road to folly I was before I jumped the fence of conventional parlance and broke for the wide fields where lies my freedom.

I had been led astray by practicing the non-committal remark, "Oh, what *is* that?" as soon as the piano keys cooled off from the startling massage of the furious performer. I was bold. I even dared to be the first to speak, and I threw ambiguous meanings into that well-known exclamation, for I was assured it was always safe, whether it followed a Moskowski mazurka hot from the blunt fingers of a Kansas City poor relation, or a somnolent Chopinian prelude hypnotized by the evening star. I learned that the statute of Absorbed Attention had expired, and that the lifted eyebrow, the semi-concealed shrug, the overt smile behind the performer's back, and the *ex post facto* rescindment of all these in one mucilaginous compliment, were now good taste. Bah! I sickened of it all soon enough, for I had been piously brought up, and my Puritan blood was anti-toxic to the corruptions of the musical microbe.

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The Confessions of an Ignoramus

And so I have forgotten to speak of Grieg as a “mere sentimentalist” and all the rest of the Pharisee’s phrase-book, thank God! I can hear the “Mill in the Forest” and check up its verisimilitudes, item by item, even as I have dared to renew my youth with Charles Dickens, and laugh, cry, and grow hot and cold with Scott’s marionettes.

Yet, as I said, my innocence is not altogether empty. There is, indeed, no such thing in life as absolute darkness; one’s eyes revolt and hasten to fill the vacuum by floating in sparks, dream-patterns, figures whimsical and figures grotesque, shifting, clad in complimentary colors, to appease the indignant cups and rods of the retina. And so my musical ignorance is alive with a fey intelligence of its own. I have come at last to an original conception of what is good and what is bad by its mere psychological effect, as illogical as a woman’s intuition, yet as absolute and empirical as the test of acid and alkali by litmus.

It has come to this, that I know now I shall never hear good music again. When I was young the phrase “classical music” was still extant (I come of the middle classes, where one calls a spade a spade), and that variety of sound, “the most expensive of noises,” was as incomprehensible as was the training for its appreciation arduous; so that beauty for its own sake was unknown, or lurked behind the horizontal mountains of Truth that shut in the New England landscape.

But as my knowledge and love of art grew, and I mingled with those that spoke this foreign tongue of beauty, I had opportunity of hearing music, the only music that was worth while to them, the music that endures and lives, continually virile and creative. Curi-

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ously enough, and unhappily for me, so long a stranger to such influences, I found that some compositions spelled me with their subtlety, tranced me into revery, while others awakened active feelings of amusement, surprise, or scientific curiosity as to their construction; and so, ignorant of technique and composition, harmony, and all the rules of the art, I have gone back to the woman in me, and trust to her little ounce of instinct.

The Confessions of an Ignoramus

When the vibrant chords, the sobbing pulsations and the mystical nuances grow faint and die away as my dream mounts on the wings of an invisible melody, leaving the sawing bows, the brazen curly horns, the discs, cylinders, strings, keys, triangles, curves and tubes, with which paraphernalia the magicians of the orchestra have bewitched me, far, far, far below where I soar aloft, naked and alone in the secret spaces of my soul,— I know (not then, but afterward) that the talisman has been at work, and as the rhythm dies and I drop, drop to the world again and turn to the trembling, wide-eyed girl at my left, and am roused by the brutal applause that surges around me,— I know that

this was *music*. But I have not
heard it. Alas! Shall I
never hear it?

THE ROMANCE OF

A Music-Box Recital

HID secretly in my heart, I long had a passion for music-boxes. While I was innocent of the ways of the world, and thought that Art, as some think that Manners, had a ritual to which one must conform in order to be considered a gentleman, I hid this low-born taste from my friends and talked daintily of Brahms, his frozen music, of the architectural sonata, and other things I did not understand. How musicians and artists must have laughed at me when they saw my hands—square, constructive palms, wilful thumbs and mechanical fingers! Music-box hands! But though I had long ceased cutting stencils of other people's thoughts and frescoing my own vanity therewith, I dared not confess to John this wretchedly vulgar *penchant* for the music-box of Commerce—the small, varnished, brass and cedar affair, which is the only instrument I can play.

But at ten of the clock one night the yearning became so intense in me that I burst the bonds of my discretion, and lo! at the first word John fell heavily into my arms. He, too, cherished this unhallowed joy in secret, and had long hidden this *tendresse* behind a mask of propriety. We dried our eyes, and were into overcoats and out on the street in a single presto measure, set to a swift staccato march for the Bowery. We must have a music-box apiece before we slept—we swore it in a great forte oath! Prestissimo! but we were hungry for a good three-dollar package of discord! It was none of these modern contrivances with perforated discs and

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interchangeable tunes we were after; not the penny-in-the-slot, beer saloon air-shaker nor the anthropomorphic Pianola; only the regulation old-fashioned Swiss instrument would serve, the music-box of our youth, the wonderful, complicated little engine with a cylinder bristling with pins that picked forth harmonies from the soul of a steel comb, its melody limpid with treble accompaniments lithely sustained at the small end, where the teeth are small and active, with a picture of children skating on the cover top, and beneath, under glass—oh! rapture!—the whirring wheels all in sight, tempting the small, inquisitive finger of youth.

A
Music-Box
Recital

After an incredible amount of discussion as to the relative merits of the repertoires, we came to a decision and fled home, to abandon ourselves to the distractions of our tiny orchestras. The boxes were so full of music! They have been trying to empty themselves ever since, but the magic purse seems inexhaustible. One night, in my idyllic youth, a German band played all night long under my window; but now I could carry the divine gift of music in my overcoat pocket! I was like that Persian monarch for whom was made the first pair of shoes. "Your Majesty," said his vizier, "now at last for you, indeed, is the whole world covered with leather, as thou hast demanded!" O Allah! Now for me was the whole world patrolled with German bands! They played "Say Au Revoir, but not Good-bye" under my pillow; they gave me "Honey, my Honey" as I ate my breakfast.

Before the week was up we had learned every tune by heart, down to the last grace-note in the accompaniment. We had learned, too, the sequence of tunes, inevitable, unchanging as the laws of the Medes of old. Never again shall I be able to hear "Sweet Marie" played without a shock that it is not followed by the "Isabella

THE ROMANCE OF MUSIC-BOX RECITAL

Waltz!" Never again shall I hear the end of
a "Honey, my Honey" without a tremble of nervous
Music-Box suspense till comes the little *click!* of the shooting
Recital cylinder, the apprehensive pause, and then—hurrah!
the first gay notes of "Sweet Marie!"

But we could not long endure the perfect simplicity of the airs, and the old touch of supercivilization led us on to attempt to vary and improve the performance of our songs. It was John who discovered the virtue of a few pillows stuffed on top of the machine, and he achieved immense *con espressione* effects by waving the box wildly in the air. I contented myself with changing the angle of the fan-wheel so as to make it play *allegro*; then one got so very much music in such a very little while—surely a pardonable gluttony! Had my box been larger I might have heard seven complete operas in an hour, like the old Duke in "Sylvie and Bruno!" Yet, after all, it was versatility of quality, rather than mere quantity, that should be the greatest victory, and we set out on experiments in *timbre*. At last we found, John and I, that by inserting a little paper cylinder under the glass, so as to press on the keys, we could give Sousa the grip, as one might say, and he would cough and wheeze in a way to amply discredit the statement that there is no such thing as humour in music. A greater thickness of paper gives the effect of a *duo* with mandolin and banjo, and this was by far the most successful of our variations.

I should end as I began, I know, by a bit of maudlin philosophical moralysis. I might, for instance, trace the resemblances in the musical world and say that for me the conductor waving his baton is as one who winds the key to a very human music-box, in which each tooth of the comb is a living, vibrant human being. Or I might broach

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a flagon of morality, forbye, and show how each one of us plays his little mental tunes in a set routine, wound up by the Great Musician; what devils stick their fingers into our works, and bid us play more fast or slow, more loud, more low; what jests of Fate, who inserts her cacophonous paper cylinder that we may wheeze through misfortunate obligatos of pain.

A
Music-Box
Recital

But no! My forelegs are stuck in the bog of realism, and I shall not budge from the literal presentation, for my little kingdom of delight suffered a revolution! It was John's fault, for John had been affecting a musical countess who gave afternoon talks on the "art of listening," in a studio—dry molecular analyses of Kneisel Quartets and such like verbiage. So he came home late one night, while a music-box was bowling away merrily upon the couch with a one-pillow soft pedal. It was my music-box, too!

"Bah!" he swore, "your box phrases so abominably. It is so cold, so restrained, so colourless! Hear mine, now—isn't that an excellent *pianissimo*? There's polished technique! There's *chiaro scuro*! Oh, listen to that 'Cat Came Back!' My machine is an artist; yours is a mere *virtuoso*. Mine is a Joachim, a d'Albert; yours is a Musin, a de Kontski. Get onto the smooth, suave *legato* of this wonderful box! Hear its virile octaves! Hark to those scales, like strings of white-hot pearls dropping upon velvet!" He was moaning and tossing as he snored these parodies. It was a nightmare, both for him and for me. At four o'clock, in the first pink grey of the morning, I could endure it no longer. I arose haggardly and threw the two music-boxes into the fire!

THE ROMANCE OF



A Plea for the Precious

NOW if a youth as mad-headed as I, without bookishness or literary education of any sort, with neither much of anything to say, nor much desire to say anything — if such a charlatan would have his wares bought and his words read, he must be antic beyond his contemporains (a shorter word than the English equivalent, whereby I go forward one step in brevity and back two in translation). He must pique curiosity and tempt the reader on; he must pay a contango, which is, by the same token, a premium paid for the privilege of deferring interest. He must, in short, be “precious,” a quality essentially self-conscious. This has been at times a popular pose in Letters, and when successful it is a sufficiently amusing one, as poses go; but I name no names for the sake of the others who fall between the stools of purpose and pretence — who tie, as one might say, two one-legged beggars together and think they have made a whole man.

If I have lured you so far into the web of my vagary, pray come into my parlour, too, and be hung for the whole sheep that you are, that I may fleece you close with my sophistries before you go. I have but one toy here to amuse you. I juggle idioms and balance phrases upon my pen, and whether you laugh at me or with me, I care not, *moi*. But as seriously as is possible (seriousness is not my present pose, I assure you), I would I might wheedle some of your dogged, clogged, rugged, ragged, fagged, foggy wits out of you, and constrain you to accept my pinchbeck for true plate the while; for I

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have a little sense in my alloy, after all, and you might go further and fare the worse than by my chatter. If I dared I would jump boldly into my thesis, without apologies; but it so happens that it is one that should be itself its own illustration. I should convince you of its truth by its own garment of expression, instead of depending upon my logical introductory presentation. But this I fear to try. My pistols, I fear, are, as the Duchess of Malfi might say, loaded with nothing but perfumes and kissing-comfits.

A Plea
for the
Precious

Now that you are well a-muddled, and like to turn to a saner page, let me button-hole you with one clean statement while you stand, gasping. Indeed I fear that a dozen have fled already from my gibbering, and I speak to but one sullen survivor, determined to collect his promised interest. We know, then, the joy of colour, taste, sound and odour as mere sensual gratifications, undiluted with significance. But, since I seldom read, I have never seen the apology for the sensual pleasures of diction, pure and simple in its essence. Swinburne, I hear, has his lilt and harmonies in poesy, and perhaps that is the nearest like, except for the Purpose that drives his chariot; but I am for that runaway mood that gallops gayly forth into Nowhere, unguided and unrestrained. A twenty bookmen shall come up to me, no doubt, with their index fingers set upon examples, but I am happier in my ignorance, and I prefer to think it has not yet been done — or, at least, not exactly as I mean. Indeed, you may depend upon me to evade proof with some quibble.

Your didactic prose is a wain, pulled over the hard city street. Fiction is the jaunting-car that paddles down the by-side lane. Poetry wallops you along the bridle path with your mistress Muse on a pillion, and, but very rarely, dares across country, over a low

T H E R O M A N C E O F



A Plea for the Precious

hedge or two (but always after some fleeting hare of thought); but I—I am for the reckless run over the moor and downs—the riderless random enthusiasm of nonsense! So out of my way, gentlemen of the red coats, or I bowl you down! Mazeppa might do for a figure, but his steed was hampered with the load; his runaway had too savage an import, and it is my purpose to be only a little mad. Pegasus is a forbidden metaphor nowadays. He is hackneyed by the livery of vulgar stables. I prefer that Black Horse, vanned and terrible, who flicked out the eyes of the Second Calender, as my mount is like to serve me!

In the Sonata is an exemplification of my theory. There, now, is a vehicle that carries no passengers, save what one's fancy lades it with—it charges and soars with no visible rein to guide it, except when a thread of melody steers it into some little course of delight. So there is a secret rhythm in the best prose that is more subtile than the metres of verse, and which is to the essay what the expression of the face is to the talker. One may, indeed, use that same word, expression or gesture, instead of the common term, style. But a common or house observation shows us that there is some pleasure in the face whose lips are dumb, and I dare say there is joy for the coxcomb and female fop in the unworn gown, as it hangs on its lonely nail, or is draped on the lay figure of meaningless, meaningful form. So it is to such hair-brains and cockatoos I appeal. Come to my Masquerade and let us for a wild half-hour wear the spangles and tights of palestric impropriety, hid by a visor that shall not betray our thought. In this lesser pantomime one may be irrelevant, inconsequent and immature, and sport the flower of thought that has not yet fruited into purpose.

THE COMMONPLACE



Can you find your way through this frivolity, mixed metaphor and tricky phrase, and see what a wanton a paragraph may become when one sends it forth, free from the conventional moralities of licenced Literature? I have been to many such debauch, and have got so drunk on adjectives that I thought all my thoughts double. In this Harlequinade, too, there are more games than my promised Sonata. I will mock you the "Mill in the Forest," or any other descriptive piece, with coloured words, parodying your orchestra with graphic nonsense. I will paint the charms of the dance in seductive syllables; or no! better—the long forthright swing of the skater, this way, that way, fast and faster, the Ice King's master, the nibble of the cold, the brush of the rasping breeze, the little rascally hubbles where the wind has pimpled the surface, and the dark, blue-black slippery glare beyond, where—damn it! I shock you with a raucous expletive, and you plunk into a dash of ice-cold remonstrance up to your ears, and flounder, cold and dripping, tooth-loose, and grey with fright!

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So, at the expense of good taste and to the grief of the judicious, I force my point upon you. *En garde, messieurs*, and answer me! I find few enough who can play the game with me or for me. The age of Chivalry is gone, in horsemanship as well as in feats of arms and sword-play. Who knows the demi-volt, the caracole, the curvet, the capriole or the rest of the Seven Movements? Who is elegant in the High Manege or Raised Airs? Who prances for the sheer delight of gallant rhetoric, on Litotes, Asteism or Onomatopœia? Fain would I be bedevilled, but the Magi are passed away. I must fall back on Dr. Johnson's pious flim-flam, but the humours of his verbiage are in me, not in him.

THE ROMANCE OF



A Plea for the Precious

Yet the New Century Carnival is proclaimed and, over the water, there are, I hear, a few who are to revel with King Rex in the Empire of Unreason. On this side the nearest we have got to it is a little machine-made nonsense, ground out for the supposititious amusement of babes. But what I mean is neither second childhood, nor bombast, nor buffoonery, nor silliness, nor even insanity—though that is nearest the mark—but a tipsy Hell-raising with this wine of our fine old English speech. It has been too long corked up and cobwebbed by tradition, sanctified to the Elect, and discreetly dispensed at decorous dinner tables by respectable authors, and ladies-with-three-names who also write. It has been too long sipped and tasted mincingly out of the cut-glass goblets of the literary table.

Gentlemen-inebriates all, I wave you the red flag! A torch this way! What ho! Roysterers! Up younglings, quodlings, dab-chicks, devil-may-cares and mad-mannered blades! To the devil with the tip-staves and tithing-men, constables, beadles, vergers, deputy sheriffs and long-lipped parsons! A raid on the wine-cellar to break flagons of good English, and drink, drink, drink, till your heads spin! There is still joy and intoxication in the jolly old

bottles that Shakespeare and his giddy-phrased Bucca-
neering crew of poets filled! “By Gad-

slid! I scorn it, to be a consort

for every humdrum, hang

them, scroyles!”

THE COMMONPLACE

Sub Rosa

PERHAPS I am as discreet, honourable and loyal as the ordinary man, but I confess that at times I have a frantic desire to escape to the moon and tell all I know, or to unburden myself of the weight of dynamic confidences, pouring my revelations into the ears of some responsive idiot. In the old days a corpse was fastened to the felon's back in punishment of certain crimes, and to me a secret seems almost as deadly a load. The temptation to vivify the tale and make it walk abroad on its own legs is hard to deny.

There are secrets so dangerous that to possess them is foolhardy. It is like storing dynamite in one's drawing-room; an explosion is always imminent, and publication would mean disaster. I have known secrets myself, so outrageous, so bulging with scandal, that, had I not promptly forgotten them, they would have undone society twenty times over! There is a titillating pleasure in the keeping of such terrific truths and it increases one's inward pride to think that one knows of another what, if told, would change the aspect of a life. The temptation to tell is like being in church and suddenly seized with an almost irresistible impulse to shriek aloud, or like standing at the verge of a cliff and being impelled to throw one's self over. To give way to the perfidious thought means moral death, and when one falls, one brings others down as well.

Many of us, though we conceit ourselves to be worthy of trust, are, as regards our secrets, in a state of unstable equilibrium. Women,

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seeing and feeling things more personally and subjectively than men, are especially hazardously poised. So long as the friendship with the confidant is preserved, the secret is safe, but let estrangement come, and suddenly the balance becomes top-heavy; one's morality falls and the secret escapes in the crash of anger. I have known women who felt themselves quite free to tell secrets when the proper owner of them proved guilty of unfaithfulness. The difference in viewpoint of the sexes seems to be this: men have a definite code of honour, certain well-recognized laws of conduct acknowledged even by those who do not always obey them. "The brand of the dog is upon him by whom is a secret revealed." If a woman is honourable (in the man's sense of the term), it is a test of her individual character, and not of conformity to any feminine ethical system.

Most men, for instance, and some women (especially when influenced by love or great friendship), will keep a confidence not only passively, but actively. As Kipling's *Hafiz* teaches:—

"If there be trouble to Herward, and a lie of the blackest can clear,
Lie, while thy lips can move, or a man is alive to hear!"

It seems right, too, that in lesser cases one is justified in lying to protect one's own secret, as in disavowing the authorship of an anonymous book; for one surely need not be at the mercy of every questioner. The true confidant is not a mere negative receptacle for your story, but a positive ally.

On the other hand, there are those who hold that a singular and prime friendship dissolves all other obligations whatsoever, and that secrets betrayed are the greatest sacrifices possible upon the altar of love. Montaigne says, "The secret I have sworn not to reveal to any other I may, without perjury, communicate to him who is not

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another, but myself." There are few friendships nowadays so close as his with Estienne de la Boëtie (who, himself, "would not so much as lie in jest"); theirs was one of the great friendships of history; but there is much casuistry used by those who would manifest their importance in knowing mysterious things. They obey the letter of the law and tell without really telling, letting the truth leak out in wise hints and suggestions, or they tell part of a tale and hood-wink themselves into thinking that they have violated no confidence. Yet nothing is so dangerous as half a truth. It is like pulling one end of a bow-knot. Sooner or later it is inevitable that the hearer will come across the other side, and the cat will be out of the bag.

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But some secrets have so great a fiction interest, or such sensational psychology that one is quite unable to refrain from telling the tale, without names, or localities, perhaps, merely for the story's sake. This is, perhaps, permissible when one really tells for the study of human nature rather than as gossip. It is dangerous always, but a clever person can so distort certain details that the true characters can never be traced. For myself, I would never demand absolute confidence, for I would never tell anything to anybody whose discretion I could not absolutely trust, and a friend can as often aid one by telling at the proper time as by keeping silent.

Some secrets are told only for the purpose of being repeated. What one cannot tell one's self one must get others to tell for one, and this trick is the theme of many a farce. Women understand this perfectly; it is their code, and men laugh at it, feeling themselves superior. The three quickest ways of communication, cynics say, are telephone, telegraph, and tell-a-woman. Women are notoriously fond of secrets; it is their only chance for romance. No man who

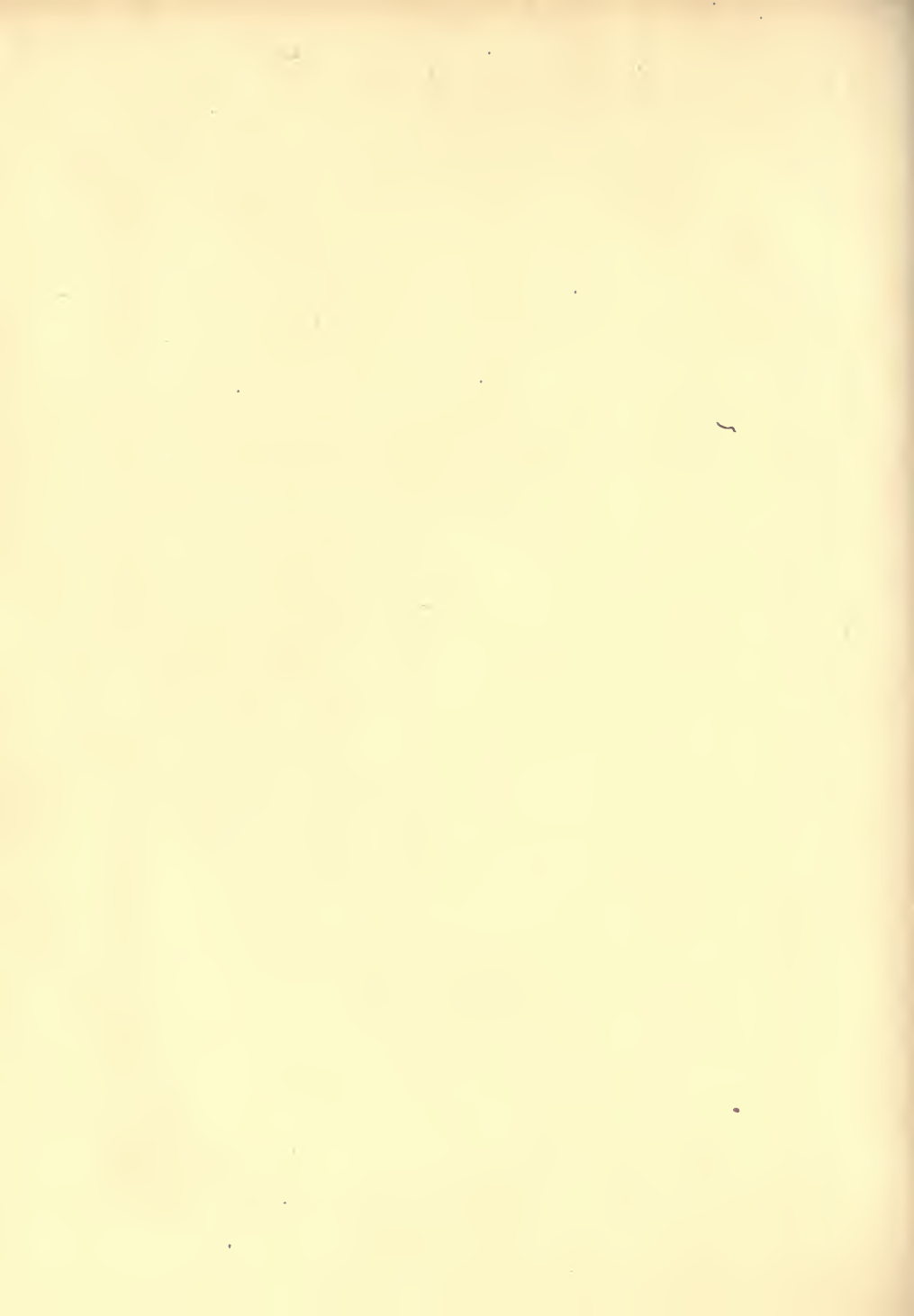
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desires to obtain a woman's affection should forget this. Not that it is necessary to initiate her into your affairs, but you will, as soon as possible, see that something happens which she may consider it wise not to tell. Cement her interest with some lively secret that ties you to her irrevocably, so that she cannot come across your photograph or your letter without a knowing smile.

There are those, too, who hold that their own idea of a secret's importance is the excuse for divulgence or defense, but a man of honor will keep the secret of a child as closely as that of an intimate friend. The ass who surrounds his every narration with mystery and takes needless precautions, has his rights, and though you may hear the tale at the next corner you are still bound to silence. Some respect their own secrets but not those of others and have no compunctions against wheedling out a confidence from a weak acquaintance, thereby becoming accessory to the fact of his faithlessness. A secret discovered should be held as sacred as a secret confided.

The desire to tell secrets is one of the most contagious of diseases, and few of us are immune. Some vigorous moral constitutions never succumb, but once an epidemic begins, it is hard work stopping it, and a secret on the rampage is well nigh irresistible. Tell your secret, then, broadcast, and let it have its way until it dies out, or else lock it in your own heart. But above all confide it not to her who asserts that she never has the slightest desire to tell, for there, like a seed sown in fertile ground, it will germinate and flower long after you have forgotten it, aye, and bring forth fruit you never planted.



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